Sotschi und die Olympischen Winterspiele 2014

Müller, Martin

Abstract: Sotschi ist der Austragungsort der Olympischen Winterspiele 2014. Der subtropisch gelegene Ort war zu sowjetischen Zeiten als Sommerhauptstadt berühmt. Für den Umbau zu einem Zentrum des Wintersports hat die russische Regierung ein gigantisches Investitionsprogramm in die Wege geleitet. Die Folgen der Gigantomanie sind fatal: Umweltschäden sowie eine für die Alltagsbedürfnisse der Bevölkerung überdimensionierte Infrastruktur. Sochi will host the 2014 Winter Olympics. With its subtropical climate, the city was renowned during the Soviet era as the summer capital. For its conversion to a centre for winter sports, the Russian government has set in motion a gigantic program of investment. With dire consequences: the gigantomaniac project will result in enormous environment damage and infrastructure quite out of proportion to the everyday needs of the local population.

Originally published at:
Müller, Martin (2013). Sotschi und die Olympischen Winterspiele 2014. Religion Gesellschaft in Ost und West, 41(7-8):21-23.

RSEW 7–8/2013
Vol. 41

Religion & Society in East and West

Black Sea Issue

CONTENTS

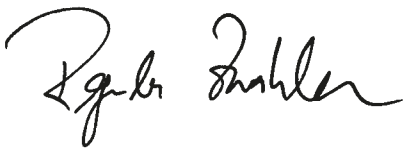
Dear reader

As is fitting for the summer months, with this issue we are taking you on a cruise around the Black Sea. The Black Sea and its coastal states might be termed the "black box" of a bygone world, teeming with secrets. One of many theories regards the breaching of the Bosphorus, which caused the flooding of the Black Sea with salt water from the Marmara Sea, as the event we know as the biblical flood. It is only since the opening of the Iron Curtain – which was pulled shut, as it were, at the 1945 conference at the Black Sea city of Yalta – that researchers, tourists and oil companies from the West have had access to a largely untouched wealth of cultural and historical sources, stunning landscapes and natural resources.

Once the centre of the classical world and located at one end of the Silk Road, the region was pushed to the periphery of European consciousness, as Christian Giordano explains in his article. Today, however, the cheap tourist beaches in Bulgaria and oil and natural gas deposits have brought the Black Sea back into the focus of a variety of actors. And by 2014, when the Winter Olympics are held in Sochi, the eyes of the world will be on the Black Sea region, at least for a few weeks.

The articles in this issue are written by researchers specialising in the Black Sea region within diverse academic fields. They deal with a variety of political, cultural and historical, economic and literary aspects of cities, regions and countries whose ports mean they are closely connected to the Black Sea and which are hoping for the region's economic and political growth – for example Istanbul and Trabzon in Turkey, Varna in Bulgaria, Constanța in Romania, Odessa, Sevastopol and Yalta in Ukraine, Sochi in Russia, Sukhumi in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and Batumi in Georgia. The authors thereby decode the "black box" of a forgotten cultural and historical heritage while highlighting new prospects for development.

This edition was created in cooperation with the research network "Academic Swiss Caucasus Net" (ASCN). We would like to thank the network's coordinators for their selection of authors as well as for their generous financial support.



Regula Zwahlen

Denis Dafflon

ASCN: a Contribution to Humanities and Social Sciences Funding in the Southern Caucasus

The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 was a pivotal event for the Southern Caucasus region in many respects. It led not only to the creation of new states such as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, but also necessitated that these states devised functional institutions serving their citizens. Nevertheless, the shock of leaving the USSR, which went hand in hand with secessionist conflicts that would leave their mark on the areas of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the early 1990s, greatly set back the institutional and economic development of three countries, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The severe consequences have been felt particularly on the social level and in the form of high rates of unemployment.

Isolated humanities and social sciences

In this difficult context marked by strong political instability, the large number of young people prepared to work and commit themselves to the region's future represent the main asset for these countries. As in all transition countries, the development perspectives are in many respects dependent on the quality of the education system and the training of the new elites. The education system has however often been neglected by international aid; this holds particularly true for the humanities and social sciences. The large international financers have instead lent their support primarily to the development of the economy, legal systems or civil society, all of which of course represent important challenges in their own right.

The University of Fribourg has been involved in the region since 2009, through its *Academic Swiss Caucasus Net* (ASCN) program. The program is intended to assist young scholars in the humanities and sciences and encourage them to pursue a career in academia. It is our conviction that by funding research concerned with the challenges for the societies in question we are making a contribution to the development of a more democratic society and a critical, reflective and differentiated perspective on complex problems. For this reason, the last four years have seen us fund research projects on a variety of topics, such as the role of the Orthodox Church in the definition of national identity, the development of social networks, the influence of migration streams or the problem of domestic violence. Our work also entails organising seminars on methodology, awarding research fellowships and organising international conferences.

Central aspects of our work are networking and internationalisation. The region of the South Caucasus is extremely isolated – on the political and economic level as well as in terms of academia and scholarship. Just as states like Georgia or Armenia suffer from their marginal status and location, the region's researchers also lack opportunities for exchange with the international academic community.

Internationalising research

Here we are attempting to assist by supporting our target group through closer collaboration with foreign academic institutions and through networking with international scholars. This is realised by awarding grants for participation at academic conferences, summer schools and study programs in Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe. Additionally, we support the publication of specialist articles in international journals.

But internationalisation is not only achieved through networking with western and European partners. One of the cornerstones of our academic development policy is improved networks on the regional level; in this regards the activities of the ASCN program are also related to the theme of the present issue: the Black Sea region, however disparate it may appear at first glance, also offers a certain amount of similarities which could create synergies on the academic level, such as common problems, historical parallels and, occasionally, shared interests. It is this very interconnectedness of three levels (local, regional and international) that provides the key to the academic development of the Southern Caucasus region. And it is our goal to contribute to this development.

Denis Dafflon, academic coordinator of the ASCN program, *www.ascn.ch.*

ASCN PROGRAMME
ACADEMIC SWISS CAUCASUS NET
AN INITIATIVE OF GEBERT RÜF STIFTUNG IN COOPERATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG

GEORGIA

Orthodox clergy lead violent counterdemonstration against gay parade

Two priests of the Georgian Orthodox Church have been standing trial since May 23 for contravening the law of assembly and obstructing officers in the course of duty. Both men face up to two years' imprisonment. On May 17 Archimandrit Antimose (Bitshinashwili) of Sioni Cathedral in Tbilisi and Igumen Iotame (Basilaya) together with several other priests, including the Auxiliary Bishop of the Patriarch, Jacob (Iakobashwili), led a demonstration protesting against a sanctioned rally in support of the rights of gays, lesbians and transsexuals. The demonstration began with a litany of intercession, whereafter Bishop Jacob and the priests headed a crowd of 20,000 mostly strong men, many of them dressed in t-shirts bearing the slogan "Orthodoxy or death". Armed with stones and cudgels, they attacked the police cordon protecting the few dozen homosexuals and injured 28 people, including three police officers. As television pictures show, Archimandrit Antimose and Igumen Iotame were heavily involved in the violence. After the demonstration, Bishop Jacob held a liturgy in Sioni Cathedral "in the name of victory, for the Georgian people demonstrated their true identity," as he put it. All of the demonstrators were "heroes, […] we have seen how many people came today. We can draw millions onto the streets!"

In the lead up to the events, Patriarch Ilia II repeatedly appealed to the Mayor of Tbilisi, informing him that if he did not forbid the gay parade despite its having been sanctioned, the faithful would take to the streets, especially "in a country in which the absolute majority are members of traditional religions that consider a homosexual relationship a sin. […] Society has the legitimate right to protest […] peacefully. […] All religions and sciences (psychology, medicine) regard homosexuality as an anomaly and a disease."

Georgia's liberal voices were horrified by the Patriarch's comments and by the violence, and initiated a debate about the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in society, a role that had hitherto been insufficiently questioned. There thus rose a new movement, "No to theocracy!", which in next to no time was supported by some 15,000 signatories.

Following protests by western diplomatic agencies, Georgian premier Bidzina Ivanishwili declared that he had met the demands of western states to uphold the equality before the law of all minorities, including religious and sexual ones. Moreover, "more than 2,000 police officers were provided to prevent clashes between the small group of homosexuals and counterdemonstrators. But they were overrun by the several thousand protesters." Two days before, Ivanishwili had said that the Georgian government would protect the rights of all minorities, and that sexual minorities were citizens of the country like anyone else. He stated that he was aware this was unacceptable for part of society, but that "in our state there are structures of legal protection, and we will do everything to protect the rights of every minority." After the events he promised to bring all the culprits to justice. However, both of the priests on trial are yet to be remanded in custody.

The Patriarchate opened an inquiry immediately after the violent clash, but is yet to take an official stance on the matter. On May 22, Patriarch Ilia II merely said that "what has happened is sad, because the Georgian priests behaved like yobs." If it turned out that the priests had acted violently, he said the Church would deal with them in the appropriate fashion. He nevertheless considered the homosexual initiative unacceptable.

www.pravmir.ru, May 16;
KNA-ÖKI, May 27;
www.religion.ng.ru, June 5, 2013
– O.S.

GREECE

Patriarch Kirill visits the Greek Orthodox Church

Patriarch Kirill visited Greece from June 1–7, his tour taking in Athens, Thessaloniki and Mount Athos, with talks in Athens with the Head of the Greek Orthodox Church, Archbishop Ieronymos (Liapis) of Athens and the members of the Holy Synod, followed by meetings with the Greek president Karolos Papoulias and premier Andonis Samaras. President Papoulias awarded the Patriarch the country's Gold Cross of Honour "for supporting the Greek Orthodox Church in its charitable work". A few months previously, the Russian Orthodox Church had donated 517,000 euros to the Greek Church's benefice fund.

During the meeting with Premier Samaras, Patriarch Kirill emphasised the role of Orthodoxy as the foundation of the "deep-seated common ground between Greeks and Russians" which had survived all political regimes and "even the Cold War", stating that the Russians could understand the present problems besetting Greece, since they themselves had "experienced the total collapse of their political and economic system and the impoverishment of large sections of the population," the effects of which could still be felt to this day. But "especially since President Putin came to power a great deal has changed in Russia – today we are living in a completely different country." To ease the financial crisis, the Patriarch suggested an intensification of pilgrimages from Russia to Greece. Besides their spiritual significance, such pilgrimages would strengthen relations between the two countries and their Churches and contribute to the redevelopment of the Greek economy.

The next stop on the tour was Thessaloniki, where Patriarch Kirill joined a further sitting of the Holy Synod. The Holy Synod awarded him the highest honour of the Greek Orthodox Church, the Grand Cross of Paul the Apostle. The members of his delegation also received high honours. In his speech of thanks, the Patriarch pointed to the similarities between the Greek and Russian Churches: both are majority churches and continue to determine the national iden-

tities of the citizens of both countries. In a transformed Europe, he stressed, both churches must work together even more closely to deal with the challenges posed by the secular and anti-religious world.

The second part of the tour took the Patriarch to Mount Athos, where he first of all visited the Russian Panteleimon monastery, followed by the St. Silouan, Iviron, Zograf and Vatopedi monasteries. At the end of his tour the Patriarch stressed that his visit was to pursue spiritual and not political goals; a central element was the sharing of prayer. He described Mount Athos and monastic life as "cornerstones of the Church" and as essential elements of Orthodoxy. Russian observers assumed that the pilgrimage to Mount Athos, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Partriarchate of Constantinople, was also intended to foster conversations with Constantinople and expand Moscow's influence. However, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), chairman of the Department of External Church Relations, declared that the Russian monks had encountered certain difficulties on the holy mountain that had required solving. Moscow, he stated, had no "expansionist plans" regarding Mount Athos.

The *Nezavisimaya gazeta* pointed to the fact that the monastic republic took in hundreds of Russian pilgrims each year, in particular wealthy Russians, for whom special VIP tours were organised including visas valid for one year and access to all monasteries. It added that for some years now, Vatopedi Monastery had been particularly popular, numbering among the most affluent monasteries on Mount Athos. A few years ago, its Abbot Efraim (Koutsou) was at the centre of a great financial scandal (see G2W10/2010, 25–27) and was prosecuted for fraud in 2011. Since then, Abbot Efraim has returned to living in his monastery, albeit under house arrest. Patriarch Kirill paid him a visit.

www.patriarchia.ru, June 2–7; www.ng.ru, June 5; www.mospat.ru, June 7, 2013 – O. S.

RUSSIA

Duma passes "blasphemy law"

In a third reading on June 11 the Russian Duma elected to pass the bill "on causing offence to religious feelings" by 308 votes to two. The new law will come into effect when it is ratified by the Federation Council and signed by President Putin on July 1. The bill was motivated by the scandal caused by the punk band Pussy Riot in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (see RGWO 3/2013, 20–1), although for some years Ultraorthodox Church members had responded to art exhibitions questioning or criticising religion and the Church by demanding severe punishment for the responsible artists and gallery owners (see RGWO 1/2013, 24–5).

In order to punish anyone "causing offence to religious feelings", first the specially devised law in article 148 of the Russian penal code ("contravention of the right to freedom of conscience and faith") had to be integrated, now applying to "public actions implying clear disregard for society and undertaken with the aim of causing offence to religious feelings of people of faith" (see RGOW 5/2013, 5). The maximum penalty for blasphemy is a fine of up to an equivalent of 8,570 Swiss francs, one year of community service or one year's imprisonment. If the crime is committed in religious buildings or in places where confessional activities take place, the maximum penalty is increased to up to 14,270 Swiss francs, three years' community service or imprisonment for up three years. "Public desecration of religious or liturgical literature, sacred objects or those symbolic of a world view" is punishable by fines of up to 5,700 Swiss francs. Disturbing church services will be entail fines of up to 8570 Swiss francs.

The Duma's first reading of the bill took place in April and received an absolute majority, with only the Communists and several members of the party A Just Russia voting against it. Civil rights activists, several lawyers and the Presidential Council for Civil Society Development and Human Rights voiced criticism of the bill, objecting that it contravened the constitution's provision of a secular state, freedom of faith and freedom of speech and opinion. This criticism was also voiced by the Russian government, whereupon President Putin returned the bill for revision.

In mid-May the Duma passed the bill in a second sitting. Critics objected that there had been no public discussion and that the concerns of civil rights activists had been ignored; only the wording "traditional and non-traditional doctrine" had been removed and the maximum penalty reduced from five to three years. They pointed out that there was still no clear legal definition of "offence to religious feelings" and, moreover, that such a vague wording invited arbitrary interpretation.

Meanwhile, critics warn against denunciation and people taking the law into their hands; they report that even before the bill was finally passed, "Orthodox activists" were discussing actual or alleged blasphemers and organising vigilante groups on social networks, and that violent action has already taken place.

www.portal.credo.ru, April 11, 12, May 24; www.pravmir.ru, March 13; www.interfax-religion.ru, June 11, 2013 – O.S.

Patriarch Kirill criticises Council of Europe for libertarian attitude towards homosexuals

In a meeting with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in Moscow on May 21, Patriarch Kirill said it was the duty of the Russian Orthodox Church to state clearly that "same-sex relationships are a sin before God" even if people had a right to such a lifestyle. The Patriarch told Secretary General Thorbjörn Jagdland that the Russian Orthodox Church was not so much disturbed by "the existence of this sin, which has always existed" but

that it was dismayed that "for the first time in history a law will legitimise a sin." He said that the protest of millions in France against the legalisation of same-sex partnerships had "greatly moved" the Church, but that it had also been shocked that the opinion of millions of people had been ignored and that the law had been passed in the senate.

In a press briefing after the meeting, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), chairman of the Department of External Church Relations, expressed his regret that "in recent years the EU leadership has adopted an anti-Church and anti-Christian stance," citing the passing of laws in Britain and France placing same-sex and heterosexual marriages on the same level despite mass protests. He said this was a cause of great alarm for the Russian Orthodox Church, for the EU leadership was forcing onto all EU countries non-Christian norms which some were able to resist while others were not. This "conflict of world views", he held, would have untold consequences. In response, Jagland argued that the Russian authorities should grant sexual minorities the right to demonstrate, since this was a constituent feature of freedom of expression, a central tenet of the European Convention on Human Rights. He further stated that if the Russian "law on fines for propaganda promoting non-traditional sexual relations among minors" were to come into effect, this would represent a "curtailment of freedom of speech."

Meanwhile however, on June 17, in a third reading the Duma passed the controversial law banning "homosexual propaganda". In future, anyone in Russia talking about homosexuality in the presence of children risks heavy fines. The maximum penalty is a fine of up to an equivalent of 30,000 Swiss francs. Media organisations reporting on homosexuality can be closed down for three months. Foreigners can expect to deported or imprisoned.

www.interfax-religion.ru, June 21–23, 2013 – O.S.

UKRAINE

Cardinal Kurt Koch visits Ukraine

Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, has visited Ukraine for the first time. With three Orthodox Churches (the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church) and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), Ukraine is one of the most complicated ecumenical fields. During his tour to Kiev and Lviv, Cardinal Koch met with Major Archbishop Sviatoslav (Shevchuk), the head of the UGCC, and with Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan), the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), but not with representatives of the other Orthodox Churches. Cardinal Koch explained that since these Churches are not canonically recognised by world Orthodoxy, he could only entertain official relations with the UOC-MP.

For historical reasons, relations between the UGCC and the Russian Orthodox Church are also extremely uneasy, and are further fraught by the return of confiscated Church property to the UGCC to which the Moscow Patriarchate lays claim. As recently as in March, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of External Church Relations, declared the "renaissance of this church" to be "a difficult moment in the relations between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church", since this process had gone hand in hand "with excesses and the ousting of believers from their cathedrals."

At the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, Cardinal Koch gave a speech on "Perspectives of ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church", in which he outlined individual stages of this dialogue: it had received new impetus thanks to the commitment of Pope Benedict XVI to the resumption of theological dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches." The dialogue is presently focused on one of the key questions of relations between the two churches: the Primate of the Bishop of Rome. It is the role of both churches, he argued, to approach each other. This would entail the Catholic Church "intensifying its argumentation concerning the importance of the Primate for Church life and activities", while the Orthodox Church would have to "courageously get to grips with its ecclesiological problem – the autocephaly of the national churches and their nationalist tendencies." He added that it was even more important "not to lose sight of the goal of ecumenical dialogue between the two Churches, which, from the Catholic perspective at least – can only be achieved by the restoration of visible relations between the Churches," in which the eastern Catholic Churches had a large role to play. In the discussion following his speech, Cardinal Koch said that the Orthodox Church had greatly toned down its accusations of proselytism directed at the UGCC in Western Ukraine. He considered the question of proselytism a difficult matter and asserted that not every accusation was justified; it was essentially a question of "the problem of free choice" of confession and church.

In the online edition of *Orthodoxy in Ukraine*, Archbishop Mitrofan (Jurchuk), chairman of the Western Ukraine UGCC Department of External Church Relations, summarised Cardinal Koch's visit by stating that while there might not be conflicts between Unitarians and Orthodox believers in Galicia, there certainly were elsewhere; while the pronounced antagonism of twenty years ago no longer existed, "the absence of conflicts does not mean the absence of problems." He wrote that the UGCC was very active in Central and Eastern Ukraine, which had been the subject of an official complaint by the UOC-MP to the UGCC, but that the UOC-MP itself went much further. The UOK-MP, he continued, by no means denied the UGCC's right to support its flock, but it had to adhere to the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue's agreement "to prevent any proselytism."

www.risu.org.ua, May 28; June 4–11; NÖK, June 6 2013 – O.S.

Nicolas Hayoz

A Region between Stagnation, Protest and Awakening

All of the Black Sea coastal states have undergone a process of rapid modernisation and transformation in recent years. While on the one hand there has been plenty of progress in the economic sector, on the other hand the political systems have displayed an ambivalent attitude to democracy. In all of the Black Sea countries society is split between conservatism and orientation towards the West, with controversy surrounding differing concepts of modernisation: should modernisation revolve around citizens or should it be realised through "grand designs" from above? – S. K.

If one approaches the Black Sea coast and its cities by boat, some of them certainly look extremely inviting, picturesque even. Yalta for example and some other places in Crimea exude the charm of Italian coastal towns when viewed from the sea. It is not without reason that most cruise ships dock for a half or a whole day at Odessa and Yalta, some perhaps at Sochi and Constanța, and certainly most of them at Istanbul, the region's only metropolis, lying not directly on the Black Sea but on the approach.

For a few hours the western passengers can imagine how the Russian imperial families and aristocrats lived in their palaces on the northern Black Sea coast, as for example in Yalta. And the partly dilapidated "palaces" of Soviet organised tourism will give them some idea of the yearning of millions of Soviet citizens who dreamed of travelling to the Black Sea coast, just as the whole of northern Europe was once obsessed with Italian sunshine. In his book *Promenade in Yalta*, Karl Schlögel nicely sums up the significance of these places of memory: "Behind every promontory there opens up a bay, almost every place name possesses a magical sound for citizens of the former Soviet Union, whether they know it from poetry or because it is connected with memories of the happiest moment in their lives. The names trip off the tongue: Gurzuf, Sudak, Yalta, Foros, Sevastopol, Yevpatoria in the west und Feodosiya, Koktebel and Kerch in the east of the trapezium-shaped peninsula that is nevertheless the size of Belgium or the Netherlands."[1]

Millions of Soviet citizens once longed to visit cities such as Odessa, Yalta or Sochi.[2] This issue's pieces by Martin Müller on Sochi, Jens Herlth on Odessa, Ulrich Schmid on Yalta, Timothy Blauvelt on Sukhumi and Alexander Iskanderjan on Armenia outline the attraction held by this section of the Black Sea coast with its chic resorts and cities, a fascination also reflected in literature.

For western tourists, this is another world, the visible ruins of Soviet-era buildings at most an irritation spoiling the picture postcard idyll. From the deck of a luxury cruise ship, one sees wonderful stretches of coastline and towns. As they traverse the "Russian Riviera", passengers will rarely wonder who can afford the palatial resorts, hotels and villas springing into view in the most beautiful settings. And they will hardly be interested in the fact that the construction of the "palaces of the new Russian nomenklatura" comes at a cost, for example to the environment, as Galina Michaleva's article demonstrates. And the gigantic rebuilding in Sochi ahead of the Winter Olympics will have an enormous impact on both people and nature (see Martin Müller's article on Sochi and the 2014 Winter Olympics).

Societies divided

As pleasant as Karl Schlögel's optimistic perspective in *Promenade in Yalta* might sound, today, some twelve years later and in the light of the negative consequences of Putin's modernisation strategy, one hesitates to see the "typical" Russian tourist in Yalta as the embodiment of a new middle class and "irresistible modernism".[3] The representatives of the new Russian middle class probably speak many languages and will not necessary want to spend their holidays as Russians amongst Russians. They will probably want to travel abroad and make comparisons!

If the most recent sociological analyses are to be believed, the majority of Russians feel committed to a completely different set of values, namely traditional, conservative rather than modern, individualist ideals, as can be observed in the big cities and as was evident in the protests from November 2011 to March 2012.[4] It is indeed this division of society into a conservative majority and a smaller modernist section that characterises the countries of the Black Sea region. This is particularly true for Russia and Turkey, where the tensions between the conservative and modern sections of society are more pronounced and also heightened by the conflict between Islam and secularism. Interestingly, the Turkish Black Sea region, whence the current Turkish premier Recep Tayyip Erdoğan originates, belongs to one of the most conservative parts of Turkey (see Faruk Bilici's article on Trabzon). These regions, for which the "blessings" of the Turkish reform processes initiated from above were of marginal impact, number among the country's weakest in economic terms. Nevertheless, the processes of liberalisation and transformation have brought about important societal changes. And in Georgia one can also observe how President Micheil Saakashvili's radical modernisation strategy has provided the impetus for important transformations in the political and economic sectors. But this modernisation has also reinforced the division of society into a small, modern, westward-looking faction and a

larger conservative section still committed to traditional orthodox values.

The West undoubtedly has its own "divisions" in regional societies split between conservative and modern, urban factions or strata. Take for example how the French debate on recognising marriage between same-sex partners reopened conflict between conservative and modern values. It is however a different matter altogether when such societal debates take place in a democratic context with established structures of civil society and a political culture of tolerance.

An ambivalent attitude towards democracy

While processes of transformation and modernisation in the countries of the Black Sea region have brought about specific, more or less exclusive forms of capitalism, modern democracy has yet to develop in any of these countries. On the contrary, in the Black Sea's largest coastal state, Russia, we have a virtually authoritarian regime bent on pursuing uneven modernisation while refusing to open itself up to democratic reforms. All Black Sea coastal states, particularly the "new" EU member states Romania and Bulgaria, are characterised by an ambivalent attitude towards democracy, towards the demos, towards the participation of the people in politics. Formally, all of these countries have elected heads of state and politicians, but they are democracies without democrats.

All the countries in the Black Sea region can be considered a kind of "hourglass society"; both halves of the glass communicate only via a thin channel. The political parties which are supposed to mediate between society and the state primarily serve the power interests of the political elites. The hourglass metaphor alludes to the huge chasm dividing the state and society throughout the region. Everywhere, one encounters arrogant, sometimes corrupt elites who would rather govern without the people and who demonstrate an understanding of the masses based on traditional relations between rulers and subjects, a political culture of indifference and condescension displayed by the regional elites towards those to whom they should in fact be answerable.

New protest movements

In this context we must consider the protest movements that have developed in recent years in Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Bulgaria and now in Turkey too and which express the increasing dissatisfaction of the *modern* and *urban* sectors of society with the political elites who govern with scant regard for the people. It is significant that these protest movements would not have been possible without the modernisation set in motion by these selfsame more or less authoritarian rulers. The uneven "technical" modernisation processes may have created greater opportunities for consumption and were actually intended to be limited to economic prosperity, but for the younger generations in the big cities they have brought about important shifts in cultural values, particularly with regard to self-fulfilment, freedom and greater democracy. Robert Inglehart has already drawn attention to this positive correlation between economic development and democracy.[5]

It is the anti-authoritarian attitudes of *urbane* young people that call into question the authoritarian conceptions of modernisation. The aim of uneven modernisation processes was never more than the retention of power, combined with the celebration of the nation, be it the post-imperial Russian or the Turkish nationalist-Islamic version. Modernisation is intended to make the state and the nation more powerful; the strengthening of civil society through free-thinking citizens is not part of the plan. The politically active sections of the new middle classes, who also consider themselves part of a renascent civil society, are objecting to the authoritative rule of the state over the individual, to the appropriation and abuse of power by the political elites. On both sides of the Black Sea, they are resisting a marginalising discourse and an authoritarian concept of order that interprets societal movements as merely rioting and hostility to the state that is to be crushed at all costs.

In his piece on Istanbul, Nicolas Monceau draws attention to the fact that the protests that erupted due to concerns over urban construction policy also entail a clash between two different conceptions of the city which essentially reveal two opposing conceptions of modernism: an ecological version of modernisation based on preserving the quality of life in cities versus a utilitarian modernisation of "grand visions" decreed from above. No one has better described the obsession of great modernisers and their states with subjugating society to a uniform system and to control than James Scott in his book *Seeing like a State*.[6]

The disastrous consequences communist social engineering held for society can still be seen in the traces it has left throughout the northern Black Sea region. And the large-scale Sochi project on which Martin Müller writes can be considered the Putinian quintessence of social engineering with untold consequences. It is such forms of modernisation by decree to which the protests on both sides of the Black Sea object, demanding a completely different kind of modernisation concerning rights, civil treatment and democratic dialogue.

Attempts to break out from the periphery

Christian Giordano's article examines the peripherisation which has pushed the Black Sea region to the margins of the capitalist world system. He also demonstrates how in the course of the development of nation states catastrophic processes of modernisation took hold of the region and destroyed its multicultural urbanity.

The area continues to suffer from a precarious economic situation and backward regions. A few beautiful cities steeped in history will not change much in this regard. The Black Sea area may be a periphery within peripheral countries. Nevertheless there are countermovements, attempts to break out from this peripheral position. Europe is the symbol of the great pull exerted by an economic and political modernity to which the Black Sea leads, or is at least supposed to lead. Romania and Bulgaria are both already members of the EU, although no one really knows whether the desolate political situation in these two countries means the European dream is still alive or not (see RGOW 11/2012). For Georgia and Armenia however, the Black Sea and the region appear to be a metaphor for the road to Europe (see the article by Alexander Iskandarjan on the Armenian perspective on the Black Sea). Indeed, in some places on the Black Sea, considerable efforts are being invested in strengthening economic contact with western Europe. Radu Dudău points for example to the potential of the Romanian port of Constanța to become a portal to and from western Europe for the Black Sea countries. And as Giga Zedania's article on Batumi demonstrates, there are cities which are able to counter the modernisation decreed from above with dynamics of their own.

Ultimately, the protests in diverse Black Sea cities and furthermore in those countries' capital cities can be regarded as an attempt to escape from the state's authoritarian influence on many different societal spheres. A modern economy cannot be developed by oppressed and ill-informed citizens. In many places, modernisation has created the preconditions for a civil society that is willing and able to protest against inefficient, authoritarian or corrupt governments. Those who refuse to heed this protest demonstrate that they are not prepared for dialogue. Those who portray their political opponents as enemies and throw them in prison show their true character. Primarily, they show that they are unable to learn. But it is precisely this, the ability to learn, that characterises democratic societies. The fact that in the regional societies surrounding the Black Sea there is still majority support for authoritarian "rulers" or those who comport themselves as such does not mean that one should not oppose the vile political culture of the "subject" and champion the self-assertive citizen.

* * *

Many years ago in Romania, one could hear the following joke: "Which is Romania's best neighbour? – The Black Sea". This would be fitting for every Black Sea coastal state, especially for Russia, Georgia or Turkey. But perhaps the Black Sea is indeed something of an invisible friend pointing the way to a better future. And the dream of the Black Sea could also be the dream of freedom, of breaking out from the periphery, of the connection to modernity, of rights, diversity, self-realisation and tolerance. Essentially, these would not be the worst basis for the Black Sea region to at least partially recreate what Christian Giordano refers to in his article as "multicultural urbanity".

Notes

1) Karl Schlögel: *Promenade in Jalta und andere Stadtbilder*, Munich 2001, p. 209.
2) Cf. the interesting foreword by editor Katherina Raabe in the volume: *Odessa Transfer – Nachrichten vom Schwarzen Meer*, Frankfurt 2009 (see the book review by Nicole Gallina in this issue, p. 46).
3) Schlögel, *Promenade in Jalta* (note 1), p. 218.
4) Cf. Lev Gudkov: "Sozialkapital und Werteorientierung. Moderne, Prämoderne und Antimoderne in Russland". In: *Osteuropa* 62, 6–8 (2012), 55–83.
5) Cf. Robert Inglehart: "Modernization and Democracy". In: Inozemtsev, Vladislav; Dutkiewicz, Piotr (eds.): *Democracy versus Modernization. A Dilemma for Russia and for the World*. London 2012, pp. 123–44.
6) Cf. James C. Scott: *Seeing like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven 1999.

Nicolas Hayoz, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Fribourg, Director of the Interfaculty Institute for Eastern Europe, Director of the *Academic Swiss Caucasus Net* (ASCN) research program.

Christian Giordano

Multicultural Urbanity in the Black Sea Region

For centuries the Black Sea was one of the centres of world affairs, the terminus and hub for the transport of Silk Road goods to Europe. Well into to Middle Ages there was heavy interurban contact between the cities of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. From the fifteenth century on, socio-economic, cultural and political transformations saw this multicultural region undeservedly slip to the margins of Western Europe awareness – R. Z.

The Black Sea can be understood as the Mediterranean's little brother. This relationship is not to be understood merely metaphorically, for these two bodies of water are also directly related in geographical terms too – they are directly connected to one another by narrow waterways, the Bosporus, the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles. At an early juncture in his fascinating book *Black Sea*, Neal Asherson remarks that every seafarer since antiquity knew how necessary and hence unavoidable this perilous transit route was. Even Jason and his fifty Argonauts knew when they set out to steal the mythical Golden Fleece that between the Black Sea and their Mediterranean home lay the most narrow and treacherous passage that was nevertheless a crucial direct nautical route.

Interurban contact between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

The close relations are however not only determined by geography, since for centuries, millennia even, there were intensive economic and cultural ties which were forced into decline, or in some cases were even broken off, when the world was divided into capitalist and communist systems. The spread of communism after Russia's October Revolution and the creation of the so-called Eastern Bloc after the Second World War ultimately transformed the Black Sea into a *mare sovieticus* that was artificially disconnected, at least partly, from the Mediterranean region. The only exception was the northern cost of Anatolia and Thrace, both part of westward-looking Turkey.

To illustrate the close economic and cultural relations between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, one must only consider the world-famous song *O Sole mio*. The song is considered a trademark of the southern Italian city of Naples and indeed of Italy as a whole. Latterly it has been discovered that *O Sole mio* was composed in 1898 by the Neapolitan musician and composer Eduardo Di Capua in Odessa during a tour of Russia with his father's itinerant orchestra. Legend also has it that Di Capua wrote the text out of nostalgia for the sunshine of his home. Of greater significance than this pseudo-psychological speculation is the fact that Di Capua's time in Odessa was primarily spent as a coffeehouse musician, since the city was a permanent home to a small group of Italian immigrants who bought, sold and exported grain. The reason for this Italian, or rather Neapolitan presence was that at that time Italy was constantly stricken by a wheat shortage, which had a great impact on the production of pasta. The Neapolitan industry tried to compensate for this permanent deficit by systematically importing grain from the Ukrainian cornfields in the Ukraine, then known as the breadbasket of Europe. Obviously, regular deliveries to Naples went via Odessa, then Russia's most important Russian Black Sea port. It was not until the October Revolution and the Soviet collectivisation of agriculture and the subsequent famine caused by Stalin that relations between Odessa and Naples broke off.

At this point it must also be stressed, however, that the intensive economic and cultural ties between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean go back at least to the Middle Ages; we must bear in mind that one of the most important Silk Road destinations was Trebizond (today's Trabzon). One might go so far as to say that it was in the Middle Ages that the interurban relations between the two seas were at their peak. It is well known that the Silk Road was the most direct and the safest route between East Asia and Europe. Caravans travelled especially from China via Central Asia to Trebizond, carrying desirable and valuable goods which were then sold in the most important trade cities of the age. Of course, there were other trade routes such as that leading from the South China Sea via the Strait of Malacca and the Indian Ocean to Aqaba at the northern end of the Red Sea. But this route was unreliable and extremely dangerous for both goods and traders due to endemic piracy and the treacherous monsoon season. Hence the Silk Road to Trebizond remained the preferred passage for centuries.

A case in point are the Genoese, as are, to a lesser extent the Venetians and, for a shorter time, the Pisans, all of whom regularly sailed over the Black Sea to Trebizond to acquire goods from China for sale in their Mediterranean cities or for transport to Central and Northern Europe, where they were eventually sold. This route was so well travelled because both the Genoese and the Venetians possessed colonies and permanent warehouses between their own cities and Trebizond as well as in other Black Sea ports. To this day one can see the remains of such settlements, for example on the Greek islands on the Anatolian coast, which served as important stopovers. A prime example of this long-term Mediterranean presence on the Black Sea is the Heraclea

Fortress at Enisala (in the Romanian province of Tulcea), which was reconstructed and extended by Genoese traders in the twelfth century to make their maritime routes on the Black Sea safer. The ruins of the fortress have survived to this day. It must be remembered that between 1858 and 1860 the Romanians built the "Genoese lighthouse" in Constanța with the aim of anchoring the historic role of the Genoese trader community in the collective memory of this important multicultural Black Sea port.

Economic and political upheaval

After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (1435) and the discovery of new ocean trade routes and the New World (1492), the close trade links between the cities of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region were reduced, but by no means severed altogether. The cause of the partial reduction of trade links cannot be sought in isolated events, as the French historian Fernand Braudel would stress. Instead, we must examine the combined effect of a number of long-term processes.

This involves the development of what Immanuel Wallerstein has termed the capitalist world system with its specific global division of labour. Today, it largely agreed that between 1460 and 1640, in a relatively small centre of the Old Continent, there developed new modalities which enabled and necessitated the new conception and organisation of the economy. This new economic form, which brought about significant social and cultural transformations and which over time would spread all over the world, was summed up by Max Weber in the simple and catchy term "rational capitalism". For Wallerstein, the new forms of social and economic action almost necessarily went hand in hand with a tendency for spatial expansion which led to capitalist modes of production spreading throughout the world and to a restructuring of social relations between different collective economic partners, that is, between societies, states, nations, regions, cities etc. These economic and social relations based on ever-increasing (inter-)dependence entailed a specific international division of labour which had a significant impact on the social structures and cultural patterns of all societies affected by the development and expansion of the capitalist world system.

The new international division of labour within the capitalist world system was based on the systematic territorial separation of centres, peripheries and external zones. First Europe, then large sections of the globe were divided on the one hand into (a few) regions that experienced the acceleration of history in the form of a rapid modernisation of their socio-economic structure, and on the other hand into (many) areas that would undergo centuries of stagnation and impoverishment which went hand in hand with extensive cultural disregard and marginalisation. The external zones contained societies that for a long time remained outside the world system.

The establishment of the capitalist world system created great upheaval in Europe's socioeconomic and cultural relations, which on the one hand accentuated pre-existing differences and on the other brought about the formation of new historical regions on the Old Continent.

It is therefore quite correct to claim that from the fifteenth century onwards, Europe took on an increasingly nuanced profile due to the economic and cultural differences between the centre, its various peripheries and the societies in the "external" regions which were of only marginal or occasional interest to the capitalist world system.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Jason brings Pelias the Golden Fleece.

From the centre to the periphery

After the nascence of the capitalist world system, both the Mediterranean and the Black Sea societies underwent either an extensive process of peripherisation or were swallowed up by the Ottoman Empire, which for a relatively long time remained on the margins of the world system and hence represented an external region.

The Mediterranean and northern Black Sea cities that were not subjected to Ottoman rule thus developed as peripheries primarily supplying the countries of the north-western European centre (England, Flanders etc.) with foodstuffs and raw materials for the production of valuable textiles and fur and leather goods.

Regarding the situation in the Ottoman Empire, the Porte possessed its own, independent social and economic structures. It was not until its decline, when western European observers deemed it the "sick man of the Bosphorus" that the empire was incorporated into the ever-expanding world system. The result of this process of integration was the peripherisation and gradual collapse of the mighty empire that at the zenith of its power had laid siege to Vienna. This process of peripherisation had an even greater impact on the cities and regions of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Most urban centres and their hinterlands, which for centuries had been under Ottoman rule, now stood on the periphery of the periphery.

It may seem curious that so far there has been little mention of Russia as a major player on the Black Sea. It must be emphasised, however, that until the early eighteenth century, the Moscow tsars had far greater worries and interests than plotting expansion in the Black Sea region. From the fall of Constantinople until 1700, the Black Sea was politically the *Kara Deniz*, that is, a region under Ottoman rule. It was only

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Ruins of the Genoese fortress of Heraclea by Enisala (Tulcea province, Romania).

at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in connection with the slow decline of the "sick man of the Bosphorus" that the Russian presence increased, the *Kara Deniz* relatively swiftly becoming the *Chernoye More*, that is, Russian and later Soviet-dominated waters. However, this political shift did nothing to alter the fact that the Black Sea cities remained peripheral.

A final push to the periphery can be observed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ending with the complete dissolution of empires and the disastrous development of a number of relatively small, economically disadvantaged and competing nation states. With their harsh nationalist orientation, these new nation states pursued narrow-minded policies of protectionism and brutal ethnic cleansing, leading to the ultimate decline or destruction of the once flourishing and culturally diverse, indeed cosmopolitan ports on the Black Sea.

Multicultural urbanity on the Black Sea

Probably one of the most striking socio-cultural characteristics of the Black Sea region and particularly of it urban milieu is its pronounced cultural diversity. As historians have established, virtually all peoples migrating from east to west have traversed the Black Sea coast. The entire region can thus be considered a typical area of interaction; drawing on the German historian Stefan Troebst, one might also call it a "highway of migration". But with the trading opportunities it offered, the Black Sea region also proved attractive to immigrants from Europe and Asia.

In this sense, Odessa, Constanța, Burgas, Varna, Sukhumi, Batumi, Trabzon, Samsun etc. are highly symbolic names of cities of world renown, for centuries distinguished by pronounced multiculturality, places of encounter and settlement for people from a great variety of European and Asian cultures. The urban societal framework on the Black Sea was always characterised by encounter and confrontation between individuals and groups of diverse ethnic, religious and linguistic provenance whose everyday lives were performed according to specific morals, practices, conventions and customary laws. In these cities, large groups of Jews, Greeks, Russians, Turks, Germans, Poles, Italians (especially the Genoese and Neapolitans), Bulgarians, Romanians, Armenians, Gagauzes, Tatars, Roma etc. lived in close proximity to one another. Nor should we forget the Swiss – most of them confectioners from the Val Poschiavo who settled in Odessa, where they ran exquisite bakeries. At the turn of the twentieth century, the city's leading coffeehouse, a meeting place for the literary elite, was the Luxuscafé, established in 1872 by Giacomo Fanconi from the Puschlav valley. (The café exists to this day.)

Lest too rosy a picture of urban multiculturality be conveyed, it must also be pointed out that this coexistence between the various ethnic communities was not always without its problems. In the Black Sea coastal cities there were permanent interethnic tensions and confrontations. While some could be resolved or assuaged by by protracted negotiation and compromise, others resulted in violence, as Neal Asherson demonstrates with the example of Sukhumi. The outbreak of such bloody conflicts is not to be seen as a negative phenomenon peculiar to the region, since they are rather the rule than an exception. Hence in the multicultural cities of the Black Sea, the various ethnic groups lived in segregation, in a permanent atmosphere of mistrust which was acerbated considerably by the birth of nation states and by the Soviet repression of economically successful diaspora communities. For the Black Sea region, the twentieth century was an age of ethnic cleansing and often pogroms. A prime example is the fate of the Pontic Greeks, who in the course of the twentieth century were forced to return to Greece and were compelled to live the paradox of a tolerated diaspora in their own nation.

* * *

For the majority of Western Europeans, the Black Sea is a distant and almost unknown region, a blank page. A closer examination of its urban development reconstructing the region's socio-economic, cultural and political events provides an entirely different picture. Due to its turbulent past and present, the Black Sea represents an independent historical region that through its long-term, extraordinarily dramatic socio-cultural dynamic resembles an active volcano's continuous series of eruptions.

Literature

Neal Asherson: *Black Sea*. New York 1995; **Charles King**: *The Black Sea: A History*. Oxford 2004; **Stefan Troebst**: "Le Monde méditerranéen – Südosteuropa – Black Sea World: Geschichtsregionen im Süden Europas". In: Frithjof B Schenk; Martina Winkler (eds.): *Der Süden: neue Perspektiven auf eine europäische Geschichtsregion*. Frankfurt/M. 2007, pp. 49–74.

Christian Giordano, Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Fribourg.

Nicolas Monceau

The Protest Movement in Istanbul

The protests in Istanbul in recent months have become an outlet for many dissatisfied Turks greatly worried by the country's enforced urbanisation and the increasingly authoritarian governance of premier Erdoğan. The heterogeneous composition of the demonstrators demonstrates the diverse concerns of the population of a city which has a special geographical and cultural-historical status and which finds itself in a sustained process of modernisation. – R. Z.

In the last two months the city of Istanbul has experienced an unprecedented wave of demonstrations. What began as a demonstration against a local urban building project – against the reconstruction of a central square in Istanbul involving the destruction of a local park for the erection of a shopping centre – has become a broad, many-voiced mass protest movement against the political rulers, a movement which has mobilised thousands of Turkish citizens from a variety of backgrounds giving voice to various demands. This event came completely out of the blue. In Turkey, demonstrations of various sizes and significance take place regularly, almost weekly. Whether sanctioned or not, they rarely generate as much global interest as the latest protest in Istanbul. And since its earliest days, Istanbul has repeatedly witnessed the destruction of its natural and urban heritage, be it monuments from all its periods (Byzantine, Ottoman, Republican), palaces, mosques or indeed parks.

How then to explain this sudden explosion in Istanbul and the rest of the country which the rest of the world has followed through its striking reporting in the media?

The protest's expansion

The demonstrations of recent months began with the protest against an urban spatial planning project involving the construction of a multifunctional building complex with a shopping centre, exhibition rooms and a cafés on the site of Gezi Park near Taksim Square in the city centre. The project also has an historical dimension, since it is inspired by the architectural plan of the former Ottoman barracks destroyed in the 1940s to make room for the park.

On May 28, the demonstrators began a sit-in of approximately 50 local residents, who were quickly joined by hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in 78 of the 81 Turkish provinces. The protest was led by ecologists and residents opposed to the destruction of the park. The demonstrators initially reacted to the urban building project itself by criticising the urban development policies of Istanbul's municipal authorities, claiming they aimed at a "concretisation" of the city, as evidenced by the new quarters with New York-style skyscrapers. The nature of the place – a park that is one of the city centre's last green spaces open to the public – accentuated the protest's symbolism.

But faced with the uncompromising position taken by Turkish premier Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who quickly waded in on the issue, the demonstrators expanded their list of demands, the protest taking on a more political dimension: new targets were the chaotic government policies of the AKP ("Justice and Development Party", in power since 2002 and portrayed by the western media as moderately Islamic) and the authoritarian excesses of premier Erdoğan, and his intention, be it real or suspected, of imposing a more conservative lifestyle on Turkish society and of questioning the principle of secularism laid down by the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

The protest movement grew from day to day and gathered quite different sections of the population: young city dwellers who felt their western lifestyle was under threat; activists defending ecological values; Kemalists defending secularism; champions of a political Islamism; but also Alevites, Turkey's Shiite minority, often considered progressive, and women, westernised or otherwise, some wearers of headscarves. Together they form a minority acting polymorphously in the face of the "silent majority" of AKP voters to whom the premier has appealed in a reaction to the protests, with an eye on the forthcoming municipal elections in the spring of 2014.

Istanbul has not seen a protest movement of such dimension for decades. How to explain it?

The violent response of the security forces

An initial explanation might be found in the political regime's development in recent years, and in the political elites' "answer" to the demonstrations. Their response was considered brutal and violent – there have been many dead, innumerable wounded and hundreds have been arrested and detained. The vehemence of the security forces' response surprised many. The way the political authorities, particularly the premier, reacted to the demonstrations was severe and uncompromising. In the eyes of the international community, the police response was "too strong" or even "out of proportion"; the European Union and the USA intervened and called for moderation. For a country that has been campaigning to join the EU since 1999 and has been in accession negotiations since 2005, this excessive violence has revived painful memories of a political regime associated with, among other issues, regular police violence and three military putsches, each of which were followed by harsh political and social repression. These events were often at the centre of debates on the integration of Turkey into Europe and the necessary reforms in this regard.

The unique nature of the protest and the worldwide echo it has found can be further explained in terms of the structural background of its demands. The opposition to the building project, of which there have been many in recent years, points to two competing urban visions: one

of these visions champions a more humane living space in the middle of a sprawling urban area – it is estimated that within a few decades the population of Istanbul will have increased from a million to 15 million (due to migration from Anatolia). The protesters envisage a city that is accessible for the individual citizen, and where in view of the dominant urbanisation some green spaces can be preserved as a characteristic of an urban identity. This vision also entertains ecological values that some would probably term idealistic if not indeed Romantic. The other, dominant vision is more pragmatic and in some circles is considered cynical: it places urban modernisation and the necessities of economic development at the head of national priorities – at the cost of natural and historical heritage, at the cost of the historical identify of the city.


Photo: Keystone

Young Turkish demonstrators are driven from Taksim Square with tear gas.

But the battlefield on Taksim Square rapidly unleashed further demands and in the eyes of the international media it has become an outlet for frustration and bitterness, anger and resistance to a regime that is felt to be authoritarian, whose excesses are being challenged increasingly openly by a group of citizens that cannot be compared with the political opposition to the AKP that has hitherto existed. It is against this background that questions arise concerning the political sustainability of this movement in the face of a political party that has dominated Turkey's political landscape for over ten years and that is prepared to flex its muscles, as the events on Taksim Square demonstrate. Furthermore, the events could even strengthen the AKP's electoral base and ensure it a comfortable victory in the next municipal and presidential elections.

The symbolic significance of Taksim Square

A third key to interpreting events is the highly symbolic dimension of the contested urban space: Taksim Square. Situated on the European bank of Istanbul, at the entrance to the old European Galata quarter, the square has a special place in the collective memory of the nation; at its centre stands the famous monument of the Republic (*Cumhuriyet Anıtı*) erected in 1928 to honour the heroes of Turkish independence and the founding of the Republic of Turkey. It is here that the Kemalists gather each year on October 29 to commemorate the proclamation of the Republic.

Taksim Square is also the site of the Atatürk Cultural Centre, an impressive cultural state complex housing the national opera and hosting music, theatre and ballet performances. Certain religious and traditionalist groups or conservative circles have repeatedly called for the destruction of a building that they consider a symbol of a foreign culture, a product of the westernisation of Turkey. Such calls were made with great frequency in the 1990s when the Refah Party, a forerunner of the AKP, controlled the offices of municipal authority in Istanbul and Ankara, and were part of a more general campaign against the "imported" arts (dance, ballet, sculpture), which were rejected on account of their otherness to Turkish culture and their "immoral" nature. Today, many people remember how in March 1994 the newly elected Mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, presently the country's premier, declared of ballet, "Ballet leads people to concerns below the belt", causing such a general outcry in the affected artists' circles that the minister for culture had to intervene.

In this cultural and above all ideological context a further urban project has been the subject of controversy for several decades: the construction of a large mosque on Taksim Square, a project that was taken up again after the Refah Party won the municipal elections in 1994. This political and intellectual debate has raged in Istanbul for twenty years and now appears to have become more concrete. The site proposed for the mosque is next to the Atatürk Cultural Centre.

Taksim Square also has strong symbolism as a place of social and trade union protest. The May Day demonstrations always took place on this square, until the tragic events of May 1, 1977, when snipers, later identified as members of the far right movement, fired at the crowd, killing 37. This tragedy led to the banning of May Day demonstrations on Taksim Square for 30 years, until 2010.

It is too early to interpret the present protest movement or the revolt of recent months, but opinions are already divergent: is this movement comparable to May 1968 in France and other countries? Or is it a movement of outrage or the Occupy movement? An "Arab Spring" in Turkey? A revolt of Turkey "civil society"? The future holds the answer.

Nicolas Monceau, Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Bordeaux, France. Editor of: *Istanbul. Histoire, Promenades, Anthologie & Dictionnaire*. Paris, 2010; *Istanbul réelle, Istanbul rêvée. La ville des écrivains, des peintres et des cinéastes au XXe siècle*. Paris 1998.

Istanbul: the Cultural Gateway to the Black Sea

Viewed from Istanbul, the Black Sea can be seen from a variety of perspectives: physical and human geography, historical and cultural heritage and artistic and literary ideas all shed light on the close, indeed intimate relationship tying the city of Istanbul to the Black Sea.

Istanbul and the Black Sea are closely connected in terms of geography, since Istanbul is actually a land bridge under the constant influence of two almost closed seas, the Sea of Marmara (only 11,000 km²) to the south and the Black Sea (42,000 km²) to the north. Due to its geographic proximity the Black Sea was always a gateway for the city's assailants, particularly for Russia. But at the same time it expanded Istanbul's commercial horizons, inspired its imagination and enriched it with an abundance of foodstuffs, trades and peoples. The sea has also given the city many toponyms, names of streets and districts (such as the "Lighthouse Quarter", or *Fener* in Turkish). And it influences its climate: because of the Black Sea the city is exposed to the north wind, the *Poyraz*, which the people of Istanbul consider refreshing in summer and icy in winter.

The Turks described the points of the compass using colours: it is only logical then that the Black Sea (Kara deniz) would represent the north of Istanbul, whence the Russian threat used to come. Although coastal deposits (sand, loam, coal and even iron) were delivered to the city as early as the Byzantine period, the Black Sea was connected to the city much later than the Sea of Marmara, via the long arm of the Bosphorus. Historically speaking then, it was the Sea of Marmara that was first connected with the fortunes of the Byzantine Empire / Constantinople / Istanbul.

Yet it is the shores of the Black Sea that have brought Istanbul most of its inhabitants since the middle of the twentieth century, emigrants from Rize, Trabzon, Kastamonu or Samsun have settled all over the city. In this regard the Black Sea still bears witness to the historic "Pontic melting pot" with its mixture of Scythians, Caucasians and Cimmerians, then Greeks and finally Genoese and Turks, traces of which can be found in the streets of Istanbul to this day.

The Bosphorus as a passage

The coastal city of Istanbul is divided by a channel between two seas: the Bosphorus (*Boğaziçi* in Turkish), a long strait connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. It extends for over 30 kilometres and is between 700 and 3,550 metres across, making Istanbul the world's only city located in both Europe and Asia. Archaeologists posit that the end of the Ice Age around 8000 B.C. caused the Marmara Sea to flood into the Black Sea, whose level was 200 m lower, thus creating the Bosphorus. To this day, the memory of this event survives in the myth of the Great Flood and its hero Noah.

The sea traffic on the Bosphorus from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean points to the diversity and intensity of exchange: ferries (*vapur* in Turkish) are a significant element of life in Istanbul, for they provide the inhabitatnts of both shores of the river regular crossing as well as offering an impressive scenic route to the Black Sea. The Bosphorus carries monumental freighters from Russia and other Black Sea coastal states,

Leander's Tower from the Asian shore (Üsküdar).

NATO warships patrolling the Black Sea, small fishing boats, speedboats and the yachts of affluent Istanbul families.

This constant traffic has made the Bosphorus a nautical route which also transports the entire pollution of the Black Sea and the rivers flowing into it, and the passage of several vessels of every dimension can cause a catastrophe at any moment. The inhabitants of Istanbul remember only too well the collision of the Independentza tanker with the Evriali in 1979, when 100,000 tons of petrol exploded in front of Haydarpaşa station.

Finally, the region offers a wealth of material for art and literature. The Black Sea and the city of Istanbul, as the capital of the Ottoman Empire, are at the centre of Jules Verne's *Kéraban le têtu* (1883), a novel describing the tribulations of a Turkish tobacco salesman and one of his Dutch customers. Refusing to pay the Sultan's duty for crossing the Bosphorus, they both decide to head for Scutari (today's Üsküdar) on the city's Asian shore by traversing the shores of the Black Sea.

Forests and Beaches on the Black Sea

If one travels to the end of the Bosphorus to reach the shore of the Black Sea, one soon encounters the great Belgrade Forest, located in the northeast of Istanbul, in the metropolitan district of Sariyer, and looking out over the sea from a great height. Unfortunately, the city's most important green "lungs" have been subjected to unyielding deforestation for three centuries. Today, the forest barely has more than 5,000 hectares. The forest is home to the large campus of Koc University, founded in 1993. A private institution based on the American model and teaching in English, it is one of the country's most prestigious universities.

This region is marked by many urban modernisation projects that attract colossal investments to Istanbul. The construction of the third bridge over the Bosphorus at its Black Sea mouth – a project almost twenty years old, first intended to be built over the historic village of Arnavutköy – goes hand in hand with the construction of a road and is the source of controversy surrounding environmental threats to the Black Sea. Plans are also afoot for a third international airport in Istanbul. This airport is intended to be one of the largest in the world and to eventually replace the Atatürk international airport.

Daniela Koleva

Varna: the Face of the Place

A look at Varna at the turn of the last century. Towards the end of the Ottoman era, Varna was a multiethnic city with Turkish as the *lingua franca*. After Bulgaria achieved independence in 1878, the city was transformed: in the course of national homogenisation, ethnic minorities were gradually marginalised. The city's transformation also manifested itself in changes to street names. – S. K.

If you happened to visit Varna at the turn of the twentieth century, you would see a curious mix of old and new, traditional and modern, Orient and Occident; an amalgam of ethnic groups, languages and religions further complicating the social heterogeneity typical of any urban place.

If you happened to arrive in the summer, you would join the cheerful crowds on the beach or at the seaside park. (But mind you: up until the 1930s you would only be able to stay on the beach in same-sex company; the rules stated that men and women had to be segregated.) You could listen to a variety of music styles, from Russian romances to Spanish serenades, have a meal at one of the numerous locales and watch the petty officials play backgammon and drink ouzo after work. You could try your luck in gambling in a local pub or a luxurious hotel. Certain pubs would entertain you with cancan and belly dance performed by female dancers – but without 'loose behaviour', as stipulated in their special statute. If the year happened to be 1911, you could watch a movie in a large tent accompanied by a commentator and live piano music. If you were into sports – a new leisure activity in those days – you could practice hunting, hiking, biking, gymnastics, fencing or *ritni-top* (kick-ball, now known as football). The latter was introduced by a Swiss athlete, Georges de Regibus, who spent 1894–96 as a sports teacher in Varna.

If you happened to arrive in the autumn or winter, you would be taken aback by the city's 'incomprehensible, dishevelled appearance where fogs erupt like geysers in the streets'.[1] Describing this gloomy face of the city, writer Boyan Bolgar suggested that Varna, like everything human, was Janus-faced: it had a joyous face and a sad one. I dare not disagree with the esteemed mid-twentieth-century writer but it seems to me that Varna has had many faces; some of them it has been eager to show, others less so.

Colourful and varied city life

If you were not too self-indulgent during your holiday, you would certainly notice that late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Varna was in a hurry to shake off everything Ottoman and Oriental, heading towards modernity and Europe (just as a century later it would hurry to shake off everything communist, heading in the same direction). Indeed, the city gained importance and international recognition in Ottoman times. The Austrian consulate, established in 1841, was soon to be followed by the French, Greek, Russian, British and Belgian, and later by Romanian, Norwegian, Spanish and Persian consulates. As contemporaries were quick to observe, culture had come to the Balkans mostly from the south and the west, and by land rather than sea. That is why Varna, and the whole coast, did not have the great cultural influence that might be expected, judging from the importance of coastlines elsewhere, they concluded.[2] But things changed rapidly with the establishment of independent Bulgaria in 1878. A great deal of its foreign trade took place via Varna. Records testify that in 1901, over 760 ships entered the port. As the centre of the newly established Bulgarian navy, Varna quickly nurtured its own political, military, economic and intellectual elites who, in turn, were quick to adopt everything European, from law and architecture to fashions and lifestyles. Local newspapers would devote a lot of attention to the balls at the military club where young people used to demonstrate with utmost seriousness their newly acquired skills in quadrille and polka.

Remember, it is still the very beginning of the twentieth century, World War One is not yet even on the horizon, Varna is not yet flooded with refugees and the ambitious city plan of 1891 is being carried out successfully. Shadows of doubt about anything European are just that – shadows, and they are extremely rare.

For the first two decades after the Russian-Ottoman war of 1977–78, the population of the city grew by about 50% to 35 thousand. (Today, it is 350 thousand in winter and about a million in the summer.) Understandably, the Turkish population diminished while the Bulgarians grew in number. But the city did not yet have a Bulgarian face. Referring to a 1901 census, the geographer Atanas Ishirkov enumerated eight languages spoken in the city to conclude that it 'occupies the most prominent place among the cities of the Orient where the greatest number of different ethnicities are represented',[3] thus it 'represented in miniature the characteristic ethnic mosaic of the Balkan peninsula'.[4] He then went on to further complicate this Babylonian picture, noting that some peoples spoke the languages of others: some Jews spoke Ladino, others German; some Gagauz people considered their mother tongue to be Greek, others Turkish; many Armenians communicated among themselves in Turkish. Although the census was not tailored to admit it (it did not include 'bilingual' as a category), bilingualism was the norm. Turkish was the lingua franca of this multifarious population – the language spoken in the market place. The two theatres performing in Turkish were quite popular with the more unpretentious audiences. The more sophisticated preferred the performances of the theatre society and the visits of theatrical companies from the capital, choir concerts or those of the symphony orchestra.

As the standards his discipline probably demanded at that time, Ishirkov focused extensively on the 'physiognomy' of the city, which is why the last section of his article resembled a travelogue. He vividly described the central *Mussalla* square and the streets around it. Among the noteworthy places he

mentioned the 'drinking establishments' whose number exceeded 300. 'A foreigner unfamiliar with the life of port cities and wine-growing areas cannot even imagine how little the Oriental needs, and would not grasp the source of subsistence for so many thousands of people who populate the pubs and the coffee houses from dawn to dusk', he observed.[5] Noting the social diversity of the eating and drinking population, Ishirkov stressed 'the purely democratic habits' of Varna citizens, who would mingle in the pubs regardless of all differences in social standing. Their 'great democratism' was the most conspicuous feature of the city.[6]

National homogenisation

But do not hurry to project a lighthearted version of Europe's (ideal) future onto Varna's past. In fact, the city's ethnic, religious and linguistic medley seems to have been quite an embarrassment for the builders of modern Bulgaria. There was no talk of multiculturality and metissage in nineteenth-century Europe. And Bulgaria zealously followed its model of ethnically homogeneous nation-states. Mixed and motley cities could not be further away from it. The national imaginary pictured the 'whole fatherland' as monolithic and 'purely' Bulgarian. Cities were therefore 'impure', thought of in terms of danger and shame, as opposed to the countryside, where both nature and people were pure and pristine.[7] Such powerful public tropes transcended the actual urban space, charting new borders and territories. With the help of a state administration that translated the national imaginary into urban planning, this re-structuring of the historical-national space was mapped onto the actual topography of the cities. The national myth was inscribed into urban spaces, both symbolically and practically. Varna was no exception.

The face of the city throughout the nineteenth century was largely molded by the Greek presence. The ethnonyms of Greeks and Bulgarians overlapped with occupational and socioeconomic statuses.[8] The Greeks in Varna exercised the more prestigious occupations. They used to own most coffee shops, groceries and eateries. Moreover, they were wine and grain wholesalers. Bulgarians were typically petty craftsmen: shoe makers, tailors, tanners. After independence, the situation started to change: Greeks were gradually marginalised, giving way to Bulgarian migrants from the hinterland. On the eve of independence Varna boasted 17 mosques, eight Orthodox churches and one Catholic one and a synagogue. The mosques, most of them wooden, were destroyed by fires or taken down in compliance with the new street plan. Only two survived. Bulgarian authors of the time however did not take interest in them. They registered the changes with enthusiasm, pleased that it was Bulgarians who brought all the novelties, built the new city, straightened and paved its streets, erected the monuments and created Varna's new face. But they were anxious that the trade route was still 'in foreign hands' – Greek, Gagauz, Armenian, Jewish … The real urban communities could not be comfortably accommodated in the imaginary space of the nation.

Street names: nomen est omen

Today's Varna is the result of more than a century of modernisation and homogenisation: first, its Bulgarianisation in late nineteenth century, then its socialist (re)construction after the Second World war and finally the changes after 1989. Less than eight per cent of the residents now belong to other ethnic groups. Among them, Turks and Roma are most significant in numbers, followed by Russians and Armenians, while the Greek and the Jewish community have melted away as a result of outmigration and mixed marriages. The streets of the central part bear witness to the changes. In the 1880s–1890s most toponyms were still Turkish with a few Russian, such as *Voznesenska* (the posh street at the time), *Kupecheska* (Traders') and *Kuznetska* (Blacksmiths'). All these were replaced with Bulgarian names. (The Russian names were discarded in 1889, the year of a temporary break of diplomatic relations with Russia.) National heroes, national memory and national traumas were mapped onto the city space, making it a pure, fantastic and sacred territory intolerant of hybridity and unreceptive of ambiguities. The central square lost its Ottoman name *Mussalla*, being replaced with *Nezavisimost* (Independence); later, from 1958 to 1992, it was called *9th September* (the date of the communist coup in 1944). *Taş-yollu* (Stone Road) was renamed *Vladislav* in 1888 to honour the Polish-Hungarian king who perished near Varna in 1444 in a battle with the Ottoman army. In the 1930s, this was the longest street in the city. Its prominence made it in a favorite terrain for exercises in memory politics: soon after the the communist-dominated coalition came to power in 1944 it was named after Alexander Stamboliiski, a prominent politician of the early twentieth century, leader of the influential Agrarian party. Soon afterwards, *Stamboliiski* boulevard became *Stalin* boulevard, obviously to signal the actual distribution of power. (Even the city itself had its name changed to 'Stalin' from 1949 to 1956.) From 1956 onwards, the name of the boulevard was changed to that of *Karl Marx*, an incontestable personality. In spite of its indisputability however, the name reverted in the early 1990s to *Vladislav Varnenchik*. True, Varna old-timers claim that they never referred to the boulevard other than by that name, no matter what the official one happened to be at any given moment. Some of them still remember words from the languages they used to speak while playing with the other children in the neighborhood. But they do not appear nostalgic about the loss of their older multicultural city. They have other chores. They invest in their children's future, providing for them to study English and Russian. And they march in the streets protesting against monopolies and corruption, making Varna the face of the nation-wide protests in the spring of Bulgarian discontent in 2013.

Notes

1) Boyan Bolgar: *Obitzhani predeli: Vtora kniga za rodinata* [Beloved borders: Second book about the motherland] Sofia: Perun 1943, p. 4.
2) Atanas Ishirkov,: Grad Varna [The city of Varna]. In: *Periodichesko spisanie na Bulgarskoto knizhovno druzhestvo*, 65 (1905), p. 211. I am grateful to Preslav Peev for drawing my attention to this source.
3) *Ibid*., p. 220.
4) *Ibid*.,, p. 231.
5) *Ibid*.p. 233.
6) *Ibid*.p. 234 and 236.
7) For an in-depth study of nineteenth-century Plovdiv, see Alexander Kiossev: Plovdiv i dalechnoto. Kym otnoshenieto mezhdu kulturna urbanistika i imaginerna geografia [Plovdiv and the far-away. On the relation between cultural urbanistics and imaginary geography]. In: *Sociologicheski problemi*, 3–4 (2003), 143–72.
8) See Dessislava Lilova: Natsiata i neinite gradove: vyzrozhdenski vizii [Nation and its towns: revivalist visions]. In: *Sociologicheski problemi*, 3–4 (2003), 173–91.

Daniela Koleva, PhD, Associate Professor, Sofia University.

Radu Dudău

The Black Sea: Romania's Energy Gateway

The discovery of oil deposits in the Romanian waters of the Black Sea has boosted the country's hopes of playing a leading role in European energy politics. EU strategists and regional cooperations are pressing ahead with a variety of projects. While the Romanian Black Sea port of Constanța could serve regional and international trade as far Rotterdam via the Danube, economic difficulties, administrative obstacles and outdated infrastructure mean that this potential remains largely untapped. – R. Z.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Romania's Ploiești region was, along with Baku, a major petroleum source for the Black Sea region. Oil was first extracted from hand-dug pits, but the 1860s and 1870s saw the use of drilling rigs, a technique imported from the booming industry of western Pennsylvania. After the 1877 War of Independence, the refining of oil into kerosene and lubricants started to be developed. This was facilitated by the massive involvement of foreign companies, which would characterize Romania's oil industry until the onset of the communist regime.

Oil, wind and sun: energy production then and now

But as most of the oil production was marked for export, the challenge was to bring it from Ploiești to the Danube and to the Black Sea port of Constanța. As noted by Charles King, "*Late into the nineteenth century, getting oil from well to market was still accomplished [by] pumping crude oil into wooden barrels and then hauling it in wagons over impassable roads*."[1] Indeed, Ploiești lay hundreds of kilometers from the coast, with no railway connection. Yet plans to link Constanța (the ancient port of Tomis, called Köstence in Turkish) to the Danube ports had been underway since the late 1850s, as it became part of the Ottoman *vilayet* of Tuna. Under the administration of Midhat Pașa, the Sublime Porte undertook to link the coast to the Danube and further to Bucharest, and thus promote Köstence as a regional grain trade hub, rivaling the Russian Empire's Odessa. Interrupted by frequent wars, the construction of the railway spur from Bucharest to Constanța was eventually completed in 1895. With it, sizeable quantities of oil started to flow from Ploiești to the Black Sea, where they were loaded onto newly constructed tankers.

The entry of Standard Oil, Deutsche Bank, and Royal Dutch to Romania boosted oil output sevenfold in the 1910s, and in the process they ended up controlling most of the country's oil industry.[2] In both WWI and WWII, Romanian oil was a strategic objective for Germany. In November 1916, in an effort to deny German access to the Ploiești fields, the British organized a vast sabotage operation, blowing up the region's oil rigs and refineries.

In 1936 Romania was the world's fourth largest oil producer, with 8.7 million tons per year.[3] In WWII Germany again was dependent on Ploiești, which in 1940 provided 58 percent of the German oil imports. "The life of the Axis depends on those oilfields," Hitler told Mussolini.[4] On August 1, 1943, the American Air Forces bombed the region's refineries in a daring yet costly and strategically unsuccessful raid called *Operation Tidal Wave.*[5]

During the communist decades, oil production and petrochemical capacities were further expanded. Constanța served as an export outlet for Romania's petroleum and other mineral resources. Its hinterland, the steppe of Dobrudja, was important for agricultural production, thanks to fertile soils and despite an arid climate. For energy, however, Dobrudja was a mere transit region, traversed by railways, roads, pipelines and high-voltage grids connecting the inland with Constanța and the Danube basin. However, the situation has changed profoundly in recent last years. In 1996, the first reactor of the Cernavodă Nuclear Power Plant was completed and commissioned, followed by the second in 2007. Together they now produce 19 percent of the country's gross electricity generation. And just a dozen kilometers from the seashore is Europe's largest onshore wind farm at Fântânele-Cogealac, with 240 turbines over 1,100 hectares. It was built by the Czech CEZ Group and completed in 2012. By itself, this wind farm added almost 2 percent to Romania's gross power generation. Twice as much wind power capacity was commissioned in other parts of Dobrudja's two counties, Constanța and Tulcea, while again twice as much is currently under construction. Additionally, the region hosts Romania's largest share of solar-generated power.

This quick concentration of power generation capacity in Romania's coastal counties, where energy consumption is rather low, has turned out to be just as much a blessing as a curse, because of the national transmission system operator's limited capacity to transport that power to the rest of the country. Suddenly, the idea of a submarine high-voltage cable linking Constanța to Istanbul, conceived a decade earlier, began to seem urgent. The cable would stretch 400 km under the sea and export 800 KW of electrical power at 500 kV (direct current) from crisis-struck and de-industrialized Romania, with its excess of power generation, to the energy-hungry Turkish market. The cost is estimated at about €500 million. However, the project may be behind the curve, as Turkey is currently planning the construction of three nuclear reactors, which may well turn it into an electricity exporter in a decade's time.

New gas production projects

But there is more to the Romanian Black Sea coast's rise to prominence in the way of energy production and transport. In the natural gas sector, two of the most hopeful prospects that have recently opened up are offshore deepwater gas fields in the continental shelf, and probable shale gas reserves in the Vaslui and Constanța counties.

Romania started the oil exploration of its near-shore waters in 1969 and made the first discovery in 1980. Production eventually started in 1987, but it stayed at a modest level. Overall, offshore exploration has until recently been small scale and limited to shallow waters. In 2008, the American giant ExxonMobil entered a partnership with OMV Petrom in the concession of a large Black Sea acreage. One year later, Exxon started acquiring 3D seismic data in the Romanian offshore. In March 2012, it confirmed the discovery of a gas reservoir of up to 84 billion cubic meters (bcm), which could secure an annual supply of 6.5 bcm (almost half of Romania's current consumption) for 6 to 13 years. Apart from that, the Canadian company Sterling Resources hit gas in two offshore perimeters, with estimated reserves of 10 bcm.

Concerning shale gas, another American colossus, Chevron, won in 2010 a concession agreement from the Romanian state that included two coastal blocks in Constanța county (next to Costinești and Vama Veche) and an adjacent non-coastal one (Adamclisi). Fears that fresh water aquifers might become contaminated as a result of *hydraulic fracturing*, the technology used to extract gas from shale formations, led to sizeable protests by the local communities. Nonetheless, the authorities have issued the necessary permits for these perimeters, and Chevron's exploration activities are to start in the near future.

To properly appreciate the importance of these prospects, let us put things in perspective. Romania has a relatively high degree of energy security compared to its Central and South-East European neighbors. It imports about a quarter of its annual gas needs from the sole regional provider, Gazprom. Against the backdrop of diminishing domestic oil and gas production, this relatively low percentage is partly due to a drop in consumption in the years since the onset of the economic crisis. Nonetheless the price paid for Russian gas in this part of the world is high compared to the EU average, not to mention the current gas prices on the North American markets. Accordingly, Romania could well use cheaper and more diversified gas supplies for both its own consumption and the goal of becoming a regional gas hub.

Inter-regional projects

The Southern Gas Corridor

Other than these prospective domestic sources, Bucharest has long been engaged in a broad regional undertaking encompassing the Black Sea and Caspian basins; Caspian natural gas is to be shipped to the European markets so as to bypass Russian territory. The notion of enhancing the security of supply by diversification of sources and delivery conduits has not been lost on the energy strategists of the Black Sea states or the Brussels planners. However, the progress of the *Southern Gas Corridor* (SGC), designed to pipe Azerbaijani and Central Asian gas to Europe via Georgia and Turkey, has been uneven and protracted. The corridor's whole point has been to loosen Russia's stranglehold on European gas supplies, yet the main burden has proved to be the unwillingness of some EU powers and major energy corporations to antagonize the Kremlin on this particularly sensitive front. For Russia, which delivers around a quarter of the total EU natural gas imports, the European market share is the "goose with the golden egg". It accounts for more than half of Gazprom's revenues and for a correspondingly large chunk of the Russian state budget, of which energy revenues make up no less than half.


Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Romania's Black Sea port in Constanța.

But gas exports are also a tool of coercive diplomacy for the Kremlin. It has not hesitated to cut off gas supplies to Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova during successive politico-commercial disputes since 2006. Although no country outside the former Soviet bloc has been targeted with such means so far, the states of the Balkans and the Black Sea region are in an uneasy position of overdependence on Russian gas supplies.

Until recently, the fate of the SGC has hinged on a decision concerning the route through which 10 bcm/year of Azerbaijani gas from the Shah Deniz field in the Caspian Sea will reach the European markets. As the SGC track to western Turkey was already defined (over the South Caucasus through an expanded Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline, and further across Anatolia through the planned Trans-Anatolian Pipeline), a commercial and political contest has taken place between two contending extensions toward Europe: the Nabucco West proposal – the Central-European route, which would have crossed Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary on its way to the Baumgarten an der March terminus hub in Austria; and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) proposal – the southern European route, which runs through northern Greece and Albania to southern Italy, underneath the Adriatic Sea. Eventually, at the end of June 2013, the latter proposal won out. The commercial aspects obviously prevailed over the (geo)political ones. However, at least in the short to medium term, this resulting configuration of the SGC left Eastern Europe under Gazprom's structural dominance.

Liquefied natural gas transport (LNG)

An idea ventured three years ago was that of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) chain of supply that would link Azerbaijan to Romania. The AGRI (Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector) project would consist of a pipeline reaching from Baku to the Georgian port of Kulevi, where a liquefaction train would be built; the gas would then be carried on LNG tankers to a regasification terminal in Constanța. But apart from the unrealistic costs of such an endeavor, a fundamental barrier to the project is that Turkey opposes any LNG tanker traffic through the already congested


Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Romania's Danube–Black Sea-Canal.

Bosphorus. Without the prospect of tapping into the large-scale international LNG trade, and also given Azerbaijan's limited gas supplies and multiple commitments over the next decade, AGRI makes no commercial sense.

Flexible supplies

More likely, the key to the security of natural gas supply for the Black Sea consumers is onshore interconnectivity. From Bucharest's vantage point, multiple interconnections with its neighbors are a strategic priority for several reasons: to enable short-term deliveries in case of supply cutoffs; to allow access to the regional markets for the expected domestic gas supplies; to achieve an integrated regional market, with gas flowing in either sense across the borders, traded on a competitive basis and priced "gas-on-gas" (i.e. separated from the price of oil, as is currently the case with Gazprom's long-term supply contracts).

The Danube basin: untapped potential

Now, in a broader sense, the Black Sea region encompasses not only the six riparian states, but also the entire Danube basin, stretching upstream all the way to the Alps. Access to the Danube mouths was a centuries-old point of rivalry between the Russian and the Ottoman empires. The Treaty of Paris (1856), which settled the Crimean War, marked an internationalization of the Danube's status. An international commission monitored the freedom of navigation and trade, thus opening up the Black Sea to the interests of West European powers.[6]

During the Cold War, the Danube again turned into a line of separation. Socialist Romania was one of the most hermetically closed countries of Eastern Europe, although Nicolae Ceaușescu pushed hard for the construction of the Danube-Black Sea canal, whose 64.4 km main branch was built between 1976 and 1984. The idea of the canal went back as far as the late 1830s, after the Treaty of Adrianople (1829), when the Austrian Empire proposed a means of by-passing the Russian-controlled navigation through the Danube delta by directly linking Cernavodă to Constanța. Infamously, the digging began in the 1950s by means of forced labor for political detainees, several thousand of whom were exterminated.

At present, the Danube is probably the world's most international river: it connects 14 countries (8 of which are EU member states) and is home to 100 million people. Thanks to the Rhine-Main-Danube canal, which joins the Danube and Main rivers through the Bavarian Bamberg-Kehlheim link, Constanța has a navigable artery all the way to Rotterdam on the North Sea. It can thus effectively become a gateway for the Black Sea countries to and from Western Europe. At present Romania consumes 9 million tons of oil per year, twice as much as it produces (4.2 million tons).[7] Constanța's oil terminal is an entry point for crude oil, much of which is gobbled up by a sizeable (though diminishing) petrochemical industry. The Danube-Black Sea canal allows oil transfer on barges. Yet the Constanța port presently operates at half of its 100-million-ton annual handling capacity, while transports on the Danube-Black Sea canal are just a third of its capacity. The infrastructure on the lower Danube is meager and rusty. For the 630 km section of the border along the Danube between Romania and Bulgaria, a mere second bridge has just been completed between Vidin and Calafat.

In order to boost development in the Danube basin, in 2011 the European Commission launched the Strategy for the Danube Region.[8] It reasonably endeavors to support projects that protect the environment, increase transport and energy interconnections, and advance business and scientific cooperation among the region's countries. The progress so far has been rather disappointing, but nevertheless tangible. The economic crisis saw the available finances dry up considerably; also, the recent changes in the global energy system brought the renewable energy sources – on which the strategy largely capitalizes – into disfavor because of their costly support schemes and the overall competitive disadvantage caused by the high energy prices.

Nonetheless, the Black Sea-Danube gateway has significant development potential. As it links Europe's richest and poorest extremities, the vision is to turn it into a segment of a modern-day Silk Road, and thus revive and rescale the once vibrant regional trade and travel of the Pontus Euxinus.

Notes

1) King, Charles (2006), *The Black Sea*, Oxford University Press, p. 199.
2) Daniel Yergin (1991), *The Prize. The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power,* Simon and Schuster, p. 132.
3) Dietrich Eichholtzer (2006), *Krieg um Öl: Ein Erdölimperium als deutsches Kriegsziel (1938–1943)*, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, p. 26.
4) Yergin, *idem*, p. 335.
5) The operation, in which the USAAF lost 660 people and 53 planes, is graphically described in James Dugan and Carroll Stewart (2002), *Ploesti: The Great Ground-Air Battle of 1 August 1943*, Potomac Books.
6) King, *idem*, p. 180.
7) BP Statistical Review of World Energy, June 2012, pp. 8–9.
8) European Commission (2013), *Report Concerning the EU Strategy for the Danube Region*, COM (2013) 181 final.

Radu Dudău is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest. He graduated in Physics and Philosophy from the University of Iași and took his doctorate in philosophy from Konstanz University. He has undertaken research at the universities of Oxford, Pittsburgh, and Harvard and is a cofounder of the *Romania Energy Center*, a think tank specializing in energy policy. Between 2006 and 2010 he was deputy director at the Romanian Diplomatic Institute.

Martin Müller

Sochi and the 2014 Winter Olympics

Sochi will host the 2014 Winter Olympics. With its subtropical climate, the city was renowned during the Soviet era as the summer capital. For its conversion to a centre for winter sports, the Russian government has set in motion a gigantic program of investment. With dire consequences: the gigantomaniac project will result in enormous environment damage and infrastructure quite out of proportion to the everyday needs of the local population. – S. K.

A pained smile spreads across Julia Erofeeva's face. It is a smile that tells you that in the course of 63 years she has learnt to take things as they come. We are standing on the hill directly behind Imeretinskaya Bay by the village of Adler, 30 kilometres south of Sochi and looking out over the Black Sea. Behind us lies a small Orthodox graveyard and before us the largest building site in the world: the Olympic Park, the heart of the 2014 Winter Olympics. Six stadia, arranged around a large square.

So far, there stands only a skeleton that has little in common with the glossy rendered 3-D visualisations. Dust billows where the trucks take out excavated soil and bring in building materials by the minute. The site where athletes will be adorned with medals in February 2014 was, until recently, the site of Julia Erofeeva's cottage. Together with 800 other inhabitants, she had to make way for the Olympic Park. She now lives in a house in the newly constructed village of Nekrasovskoe. Without a vegetable garden, but with all the comforts of modern housing.

Russia's summer capital

Sochi is the beating heart of the Russian Riviera on the Black Sea coast. The agglomeration extends for more than 140 km along the coast until the Abkhazian border, with a population of just under 420,000. The city proper has a population of only 130,000, however. The area's topography means that its settlements and infrastructure are concentrated on a thin coastal strip, the land rising sharply behind it; Mount Fisht, after which the Olympic Stadium is named, rises 2,867 metres a mere 30 km from the sea to form the north-western edge of the Central Caucasian range. Situated at 44° north, Sochi is at a similar latitude to Nice or Genoa. Located in a humid subtropical climate zone, it experiences colder temperatures in winter and significantly more precipitation than either of these cities however. The orographic lifts caused by the Caucasian wall bring 1,700 mm of precipitation annually – falling as snow on the high mountains in autumn and winter. The advertising slogan "Where white snow meets the Black Sea" is misleading however: the snow seldom lies for more than a few days at sea level.

Sochi's annual average temperature of 13.1°C is 3°C higher than Vancouver, which in 2010 became the warmest Winter Olympic venue. Palm trees, eucalyptus and oleander bear witness to the subtropical climate and make Sochi unique among the regions of Russia. The city is traditionally renowned as Russia's summer capital (Letnyaya Stolica) and has specialised as a seaside resort. In the Soviet Union, Sochi was probably considered the chicest holiday destination and was a model city for Soviet tourism. Many trade unions owned prestigious sanatoria there, and a visit (*putëvka*) to Sochi was a privilege granted only to the nomenklatura or to workers of outstanding merit. During the tenth five-year plan (1976–1980) a total of 47 million stayed at the sanatoria.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 also brought a collapse in the number of tourists. In the 1990s there was simply not the money to go on holiday. With the economic upturn since Putin came to power, Russian citizens increasingly prefer to spend their holidays beyond the former Iron Curtain rather than return to the old centres of Soviet tourism. More than twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Sochi receives far fewer guests than in did during its boom years. Nobody knows quite how fewer. Sochi's mayor, Anatoly Pakhomov, said there were four million summer visitors one year, but then said there were only three million. Other sources suggest one million is realistic. Moreover, the length of stays has decreased significantly: whereas earlier visitors stayed for an average of nine days, now it is only five. In sum: tourism in Sochi is a mere shadow of its former glory. The fresh-cell therapy offered by the Winter Olympics is only too welcome.

A makeover for winter sport

Until recently only a few scattered ski lifts near Sochi suggested that the topography of the Caucasus also held potential for winter tourism. Notwithstanding a few small areas such as Dombaj in Karachay-Cherkessia or on Mount Elbrus, the entire Caucasus is hardly accessible for mass tourism. The 2014 Winter Games are supposed to tap into this potential, Putin hoping to draw on Sochi's long tradition as a Soviet resort while giving the region a new image. Sochi is meant to become Russia's third city after Moscow and St. Petersburg. While Moscow represents the nerve centre of political and economic power and St. Petersburg is Russia's cultural capital, the new Sochi looks to the west; nonchalant and easy-going, it invites the global leisure society to get to know a Russia beyond oil, gas and corruption. The slogan for the Winter Games in Sochi, "Hot. Cool. Yours." (*Zharkie. Zimnie. Tvoi.*) targets the individualised hedonist, but also hints through innuendo at the libido. To support his vision, Vladimir Putin attended the IOC meeting in Guatemala in 2007, gave his personal guarantee that the organisation would run smoothly and extolled Sochi's virtues for the 2014 Games. The immodest yardsticks for the new

Aerial view of the construction work on the Olympic Park in Adler on May 18, 2012. Work on the Fisht Olympic Stadium (in the foreground) is still in progress. The Olympic village is being built to the left of the picture, the renovated airport can be seen top left.

Sochi are the established resorts of the global winter sport jet-set from Aspen to Zermatt. For Putin there is no doubt: "Sochi is going to become a new world class resort for the new Russia. And the whole world!"

Putin's promise had far-reaching consequences for the region. When Sochi was awarded the 2014 Winter Olympics on July 5, 2007, there wasn't a single venue capable of hosting an Olympic event. The area lacked tens of thousands of hotel rooms of international standard. The region was beset by frequent traffic jams, the 30-kilometre drive from the airport to central Sochi sometimes taking more than two hours during rush hour. 12 billion US dollars were set aside for the Games, but it soon transpired that this was not nearly sufficient. In early 2013 the government published a new estimate of some 50 billion dollars. The 16-day event in Sochi now surpassed the hitherto most expensive (and much larger) Summer Games held in Peking in 2008 by more than 10 billion US dollars. The event thus represents an extreme example of regional politics: investment in the region amounts to 115,000 US dollars per inhabitant of Sochi. This means that every Russian citizen foregoes an average of 350 US dollars in public funds.

Contrary to the original plan, the larger part of the money invested has come from the state purse. Preparations for the Winter Games were supposed to be a model for the role of private investors in the realisation of large-scale projects in Russia. But interest on the part of investors remained low; lucrative contracts were awarded to the camarilla, while numerous other projects promised little profit. The government thus overtly called for private investors such as the oligarchs Oleg Deripaska and Vladimir Potanin do their duty to society and finance unprofitable projects. Along with the development of resorts, it was also demanded that they foot the bill for sports venues, as a kind of indirect tax. After the Winter Olympics, these stadia would pass over into state ownership at no cost. The benefactors hoped this implied that in return they would enjoy good connections to the authorities and preferential treatment when it came to awarding contracts.

This preferential treatment is evident everywhere. Putin's bosom friend Arkady Rotenberg, for example, has built up a portfolio of 3.4 million US dollars in public contracts through his activities. The mechanisms for personal gain are similar. Either unwelcome players are put under pressure through state-sanctioned intimidation in order to force acquisition of property at favourable prices, or the prices of contracts are artificially inflated so that every stakeholder is guaranteed a corresponding slice of the cake. Those who fall out of favour have to leave the scene. The Bilalov brothers had to sell their shares in the ski area in *Gornaya Karusel'* in Krasnaya Polyana and emigrate to Germany after Achmed Bilalov had publically criticised Putin several times. Specially appointed state inspectors had established inefficiency and financial mismanagement in Bilalov's construction projects. The official line, however, is that the preparations for the Winter Games are free of corruption. In 2011, Vice Premier Dmitri Kozak declared that a large-scale state investigation had not brought to light a single case of illegal payments.

A resort from a retort

In 2013 Sochi has become the world's largest building site: almost 100,000 construction workers are working round the clock to complete the resort in time for the arrival of more than 120,000 visitors in February 2014. As was the case with the Vancouver Games, there are two clusters: a coastal cluster for the ice sports in Adler and a mountain cluster for the alpine sports and sledging in Krasnaya Polyana. Whereas the buildings on the coast are arranged around a central square and thus realise a concept of short paths, the facilities in the mountains are spread across several resorts along the Mzymta valley (see table 1). The ski areas in Krasnaya Polyana are all equipped with the latest technology, but with the exception of Roza Khutor they are all rather small. The oldest area is Alpika Service, which, like Laura, is owned by Gazprom. The first chair lifts were built here in the early 1990s, and plans were hatched to bring the Winter Games to Sochi. Two attempts in 1991 and 1995 failed due to insufficient infrastructure and the instability that characterised Russia, and particularly the Caucasus, in the 1990s.

The names of the architects and planners for Sochi read like a global who's who of the (winter) sports scene: Ecosign from Whistler in Canada helped design the bid for the Games, Drees und Sommer from Stuttgart are project managers for the Olympic Park, the Populous architects' studio designed the Fisht Olympic Stadium, the German engineering firms Gurgel + Partner and Kohlbecker designed the bobsleigh run and the ski jumps. International chains such as Radisson, Hyatt, Swissôtel or Mercure have opened hotels in Sochi and its environs. Despite the ambitions to be a player in the international market, the best chances for Krasnaya Polyana seem to lie in the Russian domestic market: with prices similar to those in the Alps, only connoisseurs will be willing to overcome difficulties in obtaining visas and language barriers in order to get to know the relatively small ski areas of Krasnaya Polyana.

The larger part of the projected budget is not for sports facilities, however, but for infrastructure, especially for transport and energy supply. The largest project is a new rail and road link between the airport in Adler on the coast and the resort of Alpika Service in Krasnaya Polyana, costing between eight and nine billion US dollars – almost double the entire investments in the 2010 Vancouver Games. The new connection will reduce the time spent travelling the 50 km from Adler to Krasnaya Polyana from

Table 1: Overview of the four ski areas in Krasnaya Polyana

	Roza Khutor	Gornaya Karusel'	Laura	Alpika Service
Owner	Interros (Vladimir Potanin)	Michail Guceriev	Gazprom	Gazprom
Length of pistes (in km)	72	12	15	25
Highest elevation	Roza Pik (2320 m)	Black Pyramid (2300 m)	1800 m	Aibga (2238 m)
Lifts (under construction)	13 (5)	8 (1)	6 (6)	6 (1)
Capacity (persons/hour)	30 600	11 340	9 800	(5 670)
Day's ski pass	CHF 46 (RUB 1500)	CHF 40 (RUB 1300)	CHF 40 (RUB 1300)	Currently under reconstruction
Olympic facilities	Alpine skiing, snowboarding, freestyle	Ski jump	Biathlon, cross-country skiing	Bobsleigh

one hour to around 30 minutes at best. The hotel capacity too is undergoing massive expansion. 42,000 hotel rooms in various categories are part of the contractual agreement with the IOC – twice as many rooms as in the entire canton of Graubünden. It is already foreseeable however that not all the hotels will be ready on time. For this reason, alternative arrangements have been put in place for some stakeholders: for example, the approximately 25,000 volunteers are to be housed on chartered cruise ships anchored on the coast.

Excesses and investment ruins

The will to reconstruct Sochi demonstrates a gigantomania that is unusual even by Russian standards. The extent of the investments puts every other large-scale post-Soviet project in the shade. The consequences are as dire as they are predictable. The enormous pressure of time felt in building the necessary infrastructure, often accentuated by arbitrary bureaucratic decisions, means that the impact on the environment and people has become a secondary concern. Even the organising committee concedes that irreversible damage has been done. This is all the more serious because the construction sites are located in Caucasian nature reserves. For example, extensive sections of the river *Mzymta* have been spoilt and straightened, pillars for the rail and road link have been cemented into the river bed, from which large amounts of gravel have been directly excavated. Meanwhile, environmental organisations have completely withdrawn from discussions with contractors after even the most fundamental aspects of environmental protection were ignored and the organising committee continues to advertise the event as the greenest Olympic Games of all time.

The project also shows little sensitivity for the region's multiethnic history, which has been full of conflict and closely tied to the Black Sea. The Sochi region was the last bastion of the Adyghe, also known as the Cherkessians or Circassians, after Tsarist Russia began the step-by-step subjugation of the Caucasian peoples from 1817 onwards in a series of campaigns in the Caucasian War. Following their final defeat in May 1864, the Adyghe were displaced and deported from imperial territory, with the result that today the majority of this ethnic group live in the diaspora beyond the Russian borders. 2014 marks the 150th year of the Adyge's violent displacement. Whereas Vancouver put the problematic history of the white settlement of western Canada in the focus of the 2010 Winter Games, in Russia the cloak of silence is folded over a similar situation. The fact that place names such as "Sochi" or "Fisht" are derived from Circassian languages is of little concern.

A resort from a retort: construction work in Esto-Sadok near Krasnaya Polyana on the River Mzymta.

The principal legacy of this gigantomania however will be infrastructure that is utterly unproportional and far too expensive for everyday needs. The combined rail-road link from Adler to Krasnaya Polyana will not be used to capacity even in high season. The total capacity amounts to 20,000 passengers per hour (11,500 by road, 8,500 by rail) – more than the number of rooms planned for Krasnaya Polyana. The subsequent use of the six stadia and the winter sport facilities will be the biggest cause for concern, however. After the Games, ownership of these facilities will pass over to the sports ministry, which foresees estimated maintenance costs of 75 to 125 million Swiss francs annually. The idea of dismantling existing stadia in other areas and reconstructing them in Sochi was claimed to be unviable and will only be realised for one stadium.

For this reason, many local citizens are dissatisfied despite the inordinate investments: they cannot see how the extravagance will be of any use in their everyday lives. On the contrary, the remaining slivers of prime real estate on the Black Sea coast and in the mountains have been sold to foreign investors and will thus be reserved for paying guests. And the cost of living has risen along with the property prices. For the foreign observer, the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi may be a fleeting lesson on the excesses of state dirigisme and neo-patrimonial politics; for the Russian leadership an opportunity to show the country at its modernised best; for the athletes and associations the height of sporting competition. But for Julia Erofeeva and her neighbours they have changed their lives immeasurably. If that change is for the better, the Russian government is yet to show how.

Prof. Dr. Martin Müller is SNF Professor at the Geographic Institute at the University of Zurich and researches on large-scale projects in Russia. He has published a more detailed survey of Sochi 2014 in issue 6–8/2012 of the journal *Osteuropa*.

Lilian Ciachir

Moldova's Black Sea Nostalgia

The Republic of Moldova has no direct access to the Black Sea: today the region of Budjak, once part of the principality of Moldavia, belongs to Ukraine. This also holds true for the city of Cetatea Albă (today Bilhorod-Dnistrowskyi), where St. John the New was martyred. Venerated to this day by Orthodox Christians in the Republic of Moldova and in Romania, this saint keeps alive Moldovan memories of the connection to the Black Sea. – R. Z.

John the New has been the patron saint of Moldova since the fifteenth century. This fourteenth-century martyr from Trebizond met his death in Cetatea Albă on the Black Sea coast for refusing to deny the Orthodox faith. During the long reign of Prince Alexandru cel bun ("the Good", 1400–1432) over the principality of Moldavia, the relics of St. John were brought to Suceava, where they remain to this day. Present-day Moldovan nostalgia for the Black Sea will be illustrated in the context of this saint.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The fortress of Cetatea Albă (Akkermann) was the last non-Ottoman Black Sea port until it was taken with Chilia in 1484.

Moldavia

The principality of Moldavia is thought to have been founded in 1363, when the voivode of Maramureş, Bogdan de Cuhea, led an uprising against the Hungarian king.[1] A Romanian presence can be traced back to 1243 or earlier. A passage in the writings of Claude-Charles de Peyssonnel (1727–1790), a French diplomat to the Ottoman Empire, clearly demonstrates that part of the border of Bessarabia – today's Republic of Moldova – was formed by the Black Sea, and that the fortresses of Cetatea Albă, the "white city",[2] and Chilia (Russian Kiliya) in the Bugeac region (Budjak; Tartaric or Turkish Bucak, "region", "corner" or "borough") in today's Ukraine[3] were then part of Bessarabia: "*Bessarabia, today Budjak, is a large province in the empire of the Khan, bordered to the north by the River Dniester, to the east by the Black Sea, in the south by the Danube, to the east by Moldavia. Its main trade centres are Bender, Kawchan, Akkerman, Kily, Ismaïl und Kichela*".[4]

Many historians consider Cetatea Albă to be the oldest fortress and "Bessarabian city on the Black Sea, on the mouth of the Dniester",[5] the site of the martyrdom of St. John the New, a Greek merchant from Trebizond. The acts of the martyrs relate that John was delivered to the Tartaric governor of Cetatea Albă by another merchant claiming that John wished to convert to the cult of the sun. John remained defiant and declared his faith in Jesus Christ, which led to his martyrdom: he was beaten, tied to a horse and dragged to death as it galloped.[6] The Orthodox churches of the Romanian region of Moldova and of course Bessarabia, today the Republic of Moldova, commemorate his martyrdom by the Black Sea on June 2 of each year. For the Orthodox faith, this feast expresses the close connection to this saint.

The Black Sea – an everlasting dream

The Republic of Moldova – a state that achieved independence upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 – is part of the old principality of Moldavia, which was forced to gradually relinquish more and more parts of its territory as a result of various international treaties.[7] The region of Budjak last belonged to Moldavia during the Second World War, between June 1941 and August 1944, until it was finally integrated into the Soviet Union on August 23, 1944. This was recognised by the Paris Peace Treaties in 1947 and still holds today, with the amendment that after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 Budjak came under the jurisdiction of Ukraine, today's Republic of Moldova thus loosing access to the Black Sea.

For Moldavians, however, the passage to the Black Sea was vital in geostrategic, socio-economic and cultural terms. The great trade route from Galicia to the Black Sea ran through Moldavia: "[…] in this case the road has created a state",[8] as the Romanian politician and historian Gheorghe I. Brătianu (1898–1953) so aptly put it. The only element of this "paradise lost" that has remained for Moldovans is the Dniester (Romania: Nistru; Ukrainian: Dnister; Russian: Dnestr), the river linking this small country to the Black Sea. However, today's Moldovans require a passport (for Ukraine and Romania) and in some circumstances a visa (for Romania) in order to get to the sea.

The myth of Moldovan victimhood

Jules Michelet (1798–1874), a French historian with excellent knowledge of Romania wrote; "How would I describe Romania, the Wallachians and the Moldavians? The nation

sacrificed."[9] The victim myth is very much part of the Moldovan self-image. It is well expressed in the national epic, the Romanian *Miorița* (the lamb) – including the Moldovans – and is manifested in the daily practice of the Orthodox faith.

St. John the New's sacrifice for the Orthodox faith adds a further element to the Moldovan myth of victimhood. Even if St. John was not a Moldavian, his readiness to sacrifice himself on the shore of the Black Sea earned him Moldovan "citizenship". Every year, the feast of St. John the New offers Moldovans the chance to remember the Black Sea as a place they have lost but could potentially regain in the future. In the collective memory of Moldovans, this nostalgia for the Black Sea has been permanently retained. It entered the poetry of the Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889), after Bessarabia and the Black Sea region of Budjak were integrated into the Russian Empire in 1878:

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

View of the harbour in Kiliya (Romanian: Chilia), today part of Ukraine.

"From Tisa to the Nistru's tide
All Romania's people cried
That they could no longer stir
For the rabbled foreigner.
From Hotin down to the sea
Rides the Muscal cavalry
From the sea back to Hotin
Nothing but their host is seen."[10]

Conclusion

Moldovan nostalgia for the Black Sea is expressed in the Republic's commitment to various initiatives in the Black Sea region: the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST), the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue (BSF).

Despite these efforts and the key geopolitical location enjoyed by the Republic of Moldova, the return of the Budjak region with its access to the Black Sea remains a dream. The only viable solution to the problem would be unification with Romania, which would at least technically provide Moldovans with access to the Black Sea.

As in the case of St. John the New, who never denied his Orthodox faith, for the Moldovans access to the Black Sea remains a value they are not prepared to give up and for which they will continue to struggle. For Moldovans, faith and land are two fundamental values constituting their very essence, and this essence includes access to the Black Sea!

Notes

1) Cf. Ioan Aurel Pop: Falsul hronic al descălecatului Moldovei – 1359, anul care nu a însemnat nimic (The false chronicle of the founding of Moldavia – 1359, a year of insignificance). In: Magazin Istoric 5 (1999).
2) The Turkish for Cetatea Albă is *Akkerman*, the Russian *Belgorod-Dnestrovskiy*, the Ukrainian *Bilhorod-Dnistrowskyi*.
3) Budjak is the southern part of the historical region of Bessarabia. Part of Romania during the Interbellum, in 1940 Bessarabia was occupied by the Soviet Union and partitioned: its northern and central areas became the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, while the southern part (the districts of Cetatea Albă und Ismail) was integrated into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1941, during the German Wehrmacht's Eastern Campaign (Operation Barbarossa), Bessarabia was regained by German and Romanian troops. The Jassy-Kishinev Operation launched on August 20, 1944, saw the Red Army overrun Bessarabia within five days. After the Second World War, the region was partitioned once more. Budjak was integrated into the Ukrainian SSR, with the result that the Moldavian SSR became landlocked.
4) Claude-Charles de Peyssonnel: Traité sur le commerce de la mer Noire, vol. I. Paris 1787, p. 304.
5) Louis Moréri; Claude-Pierre Goujet; François Étienne Drouet (eds.): Le grand dictionnaire historique ou Le mélange curieux de l'histoire sacrée et profane, vol. 2. Paris 1759, p. 448.
6) Florin Grigorecu: Sfântul Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava în viața credincioşilor (Saint John the New in the Life of the Faithful). Suceava 2003.
7) Bucharest 1812, Berlin 1878, Moscow 1939 etc.
8) Gheorghe I. Bratianu: O enigmă şi un miracol istoric – poporul român (An enigma and a miracle of history – the Romanian people), Bucharest 1940, p. 111.
9) Jules Michelet: Les Français et la Roumanie. Textes choisis par Paul Desfeuilles et Jacques Lassaigne. Bucharest 1937, p. 60.
10) Doină (1883), in: Mihai Eminescu: Poems. English version by Corneliu M. Popescu. Bucharest 1989. The title "Doină" actually denotes an old Romanian folksong form. The content of this doină is however political; Eminescu uses it to express his conservative, traditionalist and nationalist position. The poem's pronounced right-wing stance on political issues meant that it was rarely published under the communist regime.

Dr. Lilian Ciachir, Academic Assistant to the UNESCO Department in Inter-Cultural and Inter-Religious Exchanges at the University of Bucharest.

Jens Herlth

The Odessa Topos in Russian Literature of the 1920s

Built in the late eighteenth century, Odessa is a relatively young city. In many respects it is a kind of complementary model to St. Petersburg, which is also reflected in Russian literature, the city's multiethnic structure bringing forth a specifically Odessan oral culture and humour. The 1920s in particular were a golden age for Odessa literature. – S.K.

The city of Odessa, today Ukaine's third-largest with a population of roughly one million, is a young one. It was founded by the decree of Catherine II in 1794 in an area that had just been acquired in a war against the Ottoman Empire. The intention was to establish a modern port that would ensure the Russian Empire's military and economic presence in the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions. An important role in the foundation, construction and indeed in the history of the city was played by foreigners. The central pedestrian precinct, Deribasovskaya Street, bears the name of José de Ribas y Boyons (1749–1800), a general of Spanish extraction born in Naples who played a decisive role in the taking of the fortress of Khadzhibei, later renamed Odessa, and who was also the first *statthalter* (governor).

The structure of the population was diverse from the outset, with a mixture of Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, Italians and Greeks. City life was not oriented around trade alone; it did not take long for Odessa to become a centre for the arts, particularly music, the theatre for opera and ballet opening in 1810. Alexander Pushkin, who lived in Odessa during his "southern exile" in the first half of the 1820s, had the eponymous hero of his famous "novel in verse form" *Eugene Onegin* travel to Odessa. Pushkin's lines describing city already contain almost everything that would constitute the image of Odessa in later epochs of Russian literature. As early as Pushkin, Odessa is portrayed as a centre of bustling trade and as an international city in which "everything that is southern gleams and radiates lively diversity". The "language of golden Italy" rings through its streets, streets frequented by "the proud Slav, the Frenchman, the Spaniard, the Armenian and the Greek, the heavy Moldavian".

From its earliest days, then, Odessa was a kind of complementary model to St. Petersburg, the "window on Europe" founded by Peter I: in Odessa, Europe is right there, and at the same time the city is more southern, milder, less misanthropic, less rational and also less imperial than its northern counterpart.[1] If Ukrainian surveys are to be believed, today Odessa is once again one of the cities with the highest standard of living in Ukraine, after the difficult crisis years of the perestroika and post-perestroika periods. That the life in Odessa was a good one was also recognised by the narrator of *Eugene Onegin*. While he does mention the legendary filth and the water shortage, he is primarily enthused by the no less legendary *savoir vivre* of the city on the Black Sea:

> What's the use? It is of no consequence,
> Especially if without duty
> The wine is delivered.
> The southern sun and the sea …
> What more, dear friends, do you want?
> Blessed is this land![2]

The mixture of customs and ethnicities brought forth a specifically Odessan language: a form of Russian marked by characteristic phonetic peculiarities and several lexical items from Ukrainian, Yiddish, Turkish and other languages. This specific Odessa sound, the *odesskiy govor*, continues to play an important role in the cultural conscious of Russian speakers to this day, not least because it is associated with a special culture of humour.

Odessa is also the birthplace of a form of Russian-Jewish music that has enjoyed incomparable popularity since the 1920s. It is said that in the 1930 even Stalin was crazy for the "Odessan songs", which were always considered somewhat risqué, since they stilised and cultivated the world of gangsters. And it is significant that in recent years the genre of *russkiy blatnyak*, the Russian criminal's chanson, has undergone a renaissance, albeit in a somewhat diluted form.[3] In Russian literature there is an entire tradition of Odessa literature: works set in Odessa or written in Odessa or by authors from Odessa and its environs. The post-revolutionary decade of the 1920s in particular represented a golden age for such works.

Two old men in the Odessa sunshine

Isaak Babel, born in 1894, Odessa's centenary, made an important contribution to his city's image in Russian literature with his *Odessa Tales*, a collection of short stories set in the world of Jewish bandits in the pre-revolutionary age, the plots centering on the Jewish quarter of Moldovanka. The volume appeared in 1931, but the individual stories appeared in magazines in the first half of the 1920s. In a short sketch published in an almanac in 1936, entitled *Bagritsky*, the forty-year-old author recalls how he and his friend, fellow author Eduard Bagritsky, had imagined being that age: "*It was high time we left the foreign towns, on that much we agreed. Time to return home, to Odessa, to rent a cottage in the 'Blizhnie Melnicy' quarter, to write stories there, to grow old.* […] *We pictured ourselves as old men, as cunning, fat old men warming themselves in Odessa's sunshine, by the sea, on the boulevard – and casting lingering looks at the women walking past.*"[4]

But nothing was to come of this old boy's idyll; the *Bagritsky* almanac in which the text appeared pays homage

to the poet who had died two years earlier from the effects of severe asthma. Babel himself fell victim to the Stalinist terror in 1940. The world of the Jewish Odessa in which Babel saw himself and his colleague growing old was almost completely obliterated under the German-Romanian occupation during the Second World War. The 1920s, however, were the most productive period for both authors. Babel's narrative cycle *Red Cavalry* in particular revolutionised Russian prose. To this day, important authors of world literature name him as an inspiration. Eduard Bagritsky, unfortunately best known to generations of Soviet schoolchildren for "Death of a Pioneer Girl" (1932), a horrific poem in every sense of the word, was, like Babel, of Jewish origin. He made his debut before the Revolution, but, as for many others, it was the experience of the Revolution and the subsequent political and social upheaval that saw his work take on originality and innovation as he developed his own style of expressive early Soviet neo-Romanticism. The characters in his poems are criminals or commissars, border officials or smugglers:

Through stars and fishes
The boat is carried:
Three Greeks from Odessa
Have loaded contraband.
On the starboard side,
High above the valley of waves stand:
Janaki, Stavraki
And Papa Satyros.
The wind, how it howls,
How it whistles,
How it whips the foam
Against the boat's planks,
Rattling the nails,
The mast sounds:
"Good business! Fine business!"
The stars
Spray
The goods:
Cognac and tights
And contraceptives …
Aye, Greek sail!
Aye, Black Sea!
Aye, Black Sea!
Thief upon thief![5]

Here, "sea" (*more*) rhymes with "thief" (*vore*). Bagritsky's text is a prime example of the specific bandit Romanticism with which Odessa is synonymous in Russian and Ukrainian culture. This is of course also due to the bandit king Benya Krik of Babel's *Odessa Tales*. And even the most famous (and popular) crook in twentieth-century Russian literature, Ostap Bender, despite having been murdered at the end of *The Twelve Chairs* (1928), reappears in the sequel *The Little Golden Calf* (1931), just to take care of a "small, intimate matter" in the southern port of Chernomorsk; for the novel's readers it was quite obviously Odessa where Ostap intended to relieve a millionaire of his fortune. Ilya Ilf and Yevgeniy Petrov, who collaborated on both Bender novels, are both from Odessa.

Odessa does not just stand for the culture of crooks and bandits. In Babel's reminiscence the topos of Odessa is combined with the image of a southern, coastal city in which the sun always shines, in which life is played out in the streets – and which is permeated by eroticism. What comes over in Babel's reminiscence as the faded machismo of two old men is omnipresent in Bagritsky's poems: "Before her the sycamores sing and the sea hoarsely accompanies them from behind", the poem "February" relates of a girl whom the lyrical subject secretly worships and whom he watches walking down the street just like the old men of Babel's sketch. Even the girl is an embodiment of Odessa; her dress "flies with the wind" and the narrator, a lonely Jewish boy suffering from rejection, sees in her the representative of a "world in which one plays tennis, drinks orangeade and kisses women". At the end of the poem, now an "assistant to the commissar" taking part in a raid, he meets none other than his former beloved, who has become a prostitute. The pent-up hatred brought about by the humiliations of a Jewish childhood is unleashed in a brutal rape.[6]

The "Odessa School" in Russian literature

An impressive number of major authors of Russian literature were born in Odessa or have connections with the city, such as Yury Olesha, Valentin Kataev or Konstantin Paustovsky as well as those mentioned above. Paustovsky was actually born in Moscow, but his life and writing have grown so close to Odessa that the American Slavist Rebecca Stanton aptly speaks of a "conversion" to Odessa.[7] Like the city itself, Odessa literature is mixed in terms of ethnicity, language and religion. It is open on all sides. As might be expected, many of these elements soon became stereotypes that are brought up as soon as Odessa is mentioned. In the late Soviet era of the 1970s and 1980s, when Russophile and nationalist sentiments became increasingly common, Odessa's writers were attacked as representatives of a cosmopolitan literature eschewing "national" values. Indeed, the Odessa topos is as opposed to the traditional space of a "quintessentially Russian" literature just as much as it is to the imperial, northern Petersburg. Odessa is the dream of a sunny, open-minded, humorous and whimsical Russian literature.

Notes

1) On the contrast between Odessa and St. Petersburg, see Rebecca Stanton: "From 'Underground' to 'In the Basement': How Odessa Replaced St. Petersburg as Capital of the Russian Literary Imagination", in: *American Contributions to the 14th International Congress of Slavists, Ohrid, September 2008, Vol. 2: Literature*, ed. by David M. Bethea, Bloomington 2008, pp. 203–216 (p. 204).
2) Alexander Pushkin: *Evgeniy Onegin. Roman v stichach.* In: Alexander Pushkin.: *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy v 16t.*, vol. 6, Moscow, Leningrad 1937, pp. 201–3.
3) Cf. Uli Hufen: *Das Regime und die Dandys. Russische Gaunerchansons von Lenin bis Putin*, Berlin 2011.
4) Isaak Babel: "Bagritsky", in: Isaak Babel: *Sochineniya*, vol. 2, ed. by A. N. Pirožkova, Moscow 1992, p. 363.
5) Ėduard Bagritsky: "Kontrabandisty", in: Eduard Bagritsky: *Stichotvoreniya i poèmy*, ed. by G. A. Morev, St. Peterburg 2000, p. 37.
6) Ėduard Bagritsky: "Fevral'", in: *ibid.*, p. 174.
7) Stanton: "From 'Underground' to 'In the Basement'", p. 209.

Dr. Jens Herlth, Professor of Slavic Literatures at the University of Fribourg.

Christophe von Werdt

The Crimean Peninsula: A Gateway to the "Orient"

As an important trading post, the Crimean Peninsula has been subjected to various political and cultural influences throughout history. After Greco-Roman antiquity, it was the Byzantine and Genoan trading settlements that had the greatest impact. As the Tatars advanced, they introduced Islam to the Crimea. Finally, Russian rule brought with it the de-orientalisation of the peninsula. – S. K.

To this day, the Crimean Peninsula has been the subject of various cultural and nationalist political claims. As an autonomous republic within the Ukrainian state it presently enjoys a special constitutional status acknowledging the Russian and the Tartaric population's demands for autonomy articulated during the early years of Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. In the first Crimean constitution of 1992 (which was not recognised) Russians and Tartars spoke of a "multi-ethnic Crimean people" in order to lend their claims to autonomy historical legitimacy. Article 134 of the Ukrainian constitution of 1996 also states however that Crimea is an "integral part of Ukraine".

Crimea's peculiar constitutional structure reflects its multicultural make-up and history at the gateway to the Orient. For example, in the most recent Ukrainian census in 2001, 76 per cent of the Crimean population gave Russian as their first language, 11 per cent stating Crimean Tartar and only 10 per cent Ukrainian. In response to the question of their nationality, however, only 58 per cent said they were Russian, 24 per cent considered themselves Ukrainians and 12 per cent Crimean Tartars. Russian and Ukrainian culture and identity in Crimea are characterised, then, by a certain fluidity.

In the geographical lee of mass migration

This overlapping of East Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian) and Islamic Tartaric culture points to Crimea's special historical position on the northern edge of the Black Sea. This is largely due to its geographical location. The peninsula is connected to the steppe landscape bordering the Black Sea to the north only by a strip of land a mere seven kilometres across. This, the Isthmus of Perekop, was a passage for peoples migrating from Asia from the pre-Christian days on. In contrast to southern Ukraine, which remained sparsely populated well into the late eighteenth-century, the Crimean Peninsula was situated in the geographically protected lee of this mass migration zone. This was particularly the case for the small coastal strip behind the Crimean Mountains forming the southern and eastern edges of the peninsula. At the same time, the peninsula was also an ideal passage for east-west trade between Asia and the Mediterranean regions, its many bays proving perfect for creating harbours.

This function saw the peninsula rise to prominence during antiquity. From the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., the Greek colonies and ports of Chersones (near Sevastopol), Theodosia (Feodossiya) and Pantikapaion (Kerch) maintained trade relations with the Skythians and Sarmatians, Iranian horse peoples who dominated the steppe north of the Black Sea for centuries. In the fifth century B.C., the Greek settlements joined to form the "Bosporan Kingdom" in order to protect the corn supply, vital to the Greek polis, from these "barbaric" tribes. This union – which was under Roman sovereignty from the first century A.D. – existed until the Goths and Huns pushed forward in the third and fourth centuries A.D. In time, the close proximity to the Skythian and Sarmatian peoples, who had also settled in the steppe zone north of the Crimean Mountains, led to cultural and societal diffusion with the "barbarians". The Crimea's ancient Greek heritage and its archaeological legacy were to become a special topos in Russian discourses on the Crimea after the peninsula became part of the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth century.

A Genoan trading post

The Greco-Roman and later Byzantine presence in the Crimea survived well into the Middle Ages in the form of the town of Chersones and its hinterland. From the third and fourth centuries on, this also meant the presence of Christianity. The proximity to various steppe peoples (Goths, Huns, Khazars, Pechenegs, Kipchaks) and the recurring threat that entailed continued to determine the development of the Crimea. These peoples began to leave the steppe zone to the north of the Black Sea and advanced into the peninsula, forming settlements whose archaeological traces can be found to this day.

In the Middle Ages too, the Crimea was an important crossing point for many trade routes – and the peoples they served. The east-west vector (the spice route and the Silk Road) was joined by the north-south trade along the rivers crossing the principalities of Rus' from the "Varangians to the Greeks". An East Slav presence on the peninsula can thus be traced back to the tenth and eleventh centuries following the waning power of the Rus princes (Tmutorokan).

Around 1200, following the decline of the Byzantine Empire in the course of the Latin Crusades, the East Roman grip on the Crimea loosened substantially. The economic significance of the trade cities along the peninsula's south and east coast meant they became the political football of the two great Italian mercantile powers of the age, Genoa and Venice. The former ultimately became the dominant force in Black Sea trade, sealed through contracts with the Byzantine Empire and the Mongol Golden Horde. The centre of the Genoese trade colony was *Caffa* (Feodossiya), an entrepôt for the goods (spices, silk, slaves, forest products) that came from

the Mongol Empire to Europe, but also from steppe zone north of the Black Sea and the principalities of the Kievan Rus'. It was via this trade hub that Europe received "goods" that would bring huge demographic devastation: the Plague. Caffa, mainly populated by Armenians, Byzantines and Tartars rather than Genoans, was to function as a Genoan trading base until it was taken by Ottoman troops in 1475.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The north entrance to the Khan's Palace of Bakhchisaray. Built in the sixteenth century, the palace served as the residence for the rulers of the Crimean Khanate.

The Crimean Khanate

In the mid-thirteenth century, another nomadic people from Asia ruled the area north of the Black Sea; around 1250 the Mongols of the Golden Horde had already advanced into the Crimea and had subjugated the larger part of the peninsular. The earliest instance of Islam in the Crimea also dates back to this era. Islam was brought to the Crimean Khanate by Muslim merchants and missionaries seeking contact with the Golden Horde as well as with Turks resettling from Asia Minor. In 1449, the Tartaric Crimean Khanate broke free from the rule of the Golden Horde and established its own state, although in 1478 it was to accept the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. (Parts of the peninsula were indeed under direct Ottoman rule: the former Genoan colonies.)

Thus the Crimea was once again part of a political and cultural system whose centre was far removed from the peninsula. On the other hand – as in antiquity and the Middle Ages – the Crimean became a peripheral intersection between diverse spheres of power and culture which we usually locate on our mental, ideological map between east and west, or between the (progressive) "Occident" and the (backward) "Orient".

On the one hand, the Crimean Khanate shaped life in the peninsula with a new, "oriental" legacy: Islamic Tartaric culture. For the most part, the non-Muslim minorities, the Christian Armenians, Georgians and Greeks and the Jewish Karaites also adopted the language and customs of this Turkic people. These religious minorities lived primarily in the ports on the south coast.

On the other hand this "oriental" Crimean culture spread north, into the steppe zone. Nominally, the Khanate's dominion extended to this steppe zone populated by the Nogai Tartars. Still nomads, like the powerful Tartar clans of the peninsular, they seldom bowed to the authority of the Khans however. The area north of the Black Sea between the Crimean Peninsula and the middle reaches of the Dnieper, which marked the edge of Poland-Lithuania's state sovereignty, was de facto no-man's-land – from both the Khanate's and Poland-Lithuania's perspective. The "free warriors" of this steppe, the "Cossacks", had adopted more than just their name and many words relating to military and everyday customs from the Turkic languages; in terms of their way of life, their self-styling (e.g. clothing, hair) and their demographic mix too they were very close to their southern neighbours, the Nogai Tartars. In this steppe zone north of the Crimea, transfer with the "Orient" was fluid. In a wide transcultural space, Orthodox Christians (Cossacks) and Muslim Tartars shared an Eastern European borderland environment.

Russian dominance

From the late eighteenth century, the historical role the Crimea had played for millennia as the gateway to the "Orient" began to exist only in the imagination. In line with the foreign policy of the Greek Project, the Russian Empire annexed the Crimean Khanate in 1783, taking with it the Cossack-Tartar steppe zone. From the late eighteenth century on, the Russian strategy of settlement – with colonists of various provenance – identified the Crimea and the steppe north of the Black Sea as military and economic targets. Russia also sought its share of antique culture in order to bolster its standing as a European power. With the loss of the steppe zone, however, the Crimea lost its function as a passage to the "Orient".

It was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century and above all in the twentieth century that the Russian population found itself in the ascendancy. Whereas prior to the Russian annexation the Tartars had constituted over 90 per cent of the population, the census of 1897 clearly demonstrates this process of diverse colonisation and the de-orientalisation of the Crimea: Tatars 35%, Russians 33%,

Ukrainians almost 12%, Germans almost 6%, Jews 4%, Greeks 3%, Armenians almost 2% etc. This went hand in hand with the Russian aims to "civilise" the Crimea's "oriental" element – i.e. the Tartars – through integration into Christian, Russian society. Concerning the "Orient", public opinion and the state administration was suspicious and discriminatory. This led to various waves of emigration to the Ottoman Empire and ultimately, during the Second World War, to the violent deportation of the Tartar population. Today, the only reminder of the Crimea's function as an historical gateway to the Orient is provided by archaeological finds and the conflict-laden return of the Tartars since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Dr. Christophe von Werdt is an historian focussing on Eastern Europe. Teaching in the Eastern European Studies programs at the Universities of Berne and Fribourg, he regularly holds classes on his specialist areas, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish-Lithuanian and Russian history. Head of the *Schweizerische Osteuropabibliothek* (Swiss Eastern European Library) for 15 years, today he runs a freelance archival service.

Andrej N. Lushnycky

Sevastopol: a Russian City in Ukraine?

Sevastopol is the largest port on Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. Its Soviet heritage means it is a home to the Russian Black Sea Fleet, leading to endless discussion on whether or not Sevastopol is a Russian city. For many Russians Sevastopol is attractive however because they can live there without fear of political repression by the Russian government. – S. K.

A formal provincial outpost, deeply anchored in the Russian/Soviet psyche, Sevastopol maintained its status as a closed city for many years. While this is no longer true today, it is still designated a city with a special status in Ukraine, separating it from its surrounding region, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) and making it directly dependent on Kyiv. Sevastopol, the former home to the Soviet Black Sea Fleet, now plays host to the main base of Russia's notorious Black Sea Fleet (BSF) and Ukrainian Naval Forces.

Historically, the Crimea was the Crimean Tatar homeland and not Russian until they conquered it in the late eighteenth century, established the naval citadel of Sevastopol, eradicated most Tatar toponyms and later, after the Second World War, ruthlessly and unapologetically ethnically cleansed the territory. Subsequently, resettled by thousands of ethnic Russians and obedient military personnel from the Soviet Union, with a default feeling of allegiance to the empire or whatever is left of it, they remain predominantly pro-Soviet in their mindset, chauvinistic, both anti-Ukrainian and anti-Tatar.

A *cadeau empoisonné*

In 1954, Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, then Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, in celebration of the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's "voluntary integration" into the Russian Empire, infamously offered Crimea as a gift from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian SSR. What some say was merely an administrative whim, tinted with the idea that what is Russian shall forever remain in the Russian world, has in many ways turned out to be a *cadeau empoisonné*, as Ukraine now has to bear the responsibility for Stalin's crimes of deportation, and deal with Tatars who have come back from exile and the hostile locals' reluctance to accept them or restitute properties obtained by questionable means.

Whereas Sevastopol, and Crimea for that matter, are *de jure* part of Ukraine, a fact begrudgingly recognized by the Russian Federation, a foreign visitor could be excused for not noticing. In fact, a serious lack of understanding of the region is demonstrated not only by people abroad – understandable given its former status of a closed city – but also, more surprisingly, by some contemporary Ukrainian politicians. This is all too easily observed in the lackadaisical pace of integration of the region into the cultural and social sphere of Ukraine since the 1990s and further "mirrored by the high degree of Crimean native "isolationism." The dominating element of Sevastopol is of course the presence of the Black Sea Fleet (BSF), which paradoxically does not have a great deal of military significance, as it is only part of the puzzle of the fragmented diversification of the overall fleet; however, it is the basis for Russia's "historical" claim to the region.

The sense of longing for the greatness of the Empire, or at least some nostalgic neo-Soviet form of empire is at times palpable in Sevastopol. Statistically, approximately 60% of the population is considered ethnic Russian, with many Soviet and Russian naval veterans encouraged to remain in residence upon retirement. The allegiance of many inhabitants is nurtured with tens of millions of dollars of investment coming from Russia, for many years a pet project of the former Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov, and an extensive network of "political activist groups and parties, groups of parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church, neo-Cossacks, Russian cultural clubs, naval and military associations, and think tanks."[1] The ubiquitous pro-Russian media focuses on Russian priorities for Ukraine, i.e. protesting against joint NATO military exercises with Ukraine, reinforcing the BSF, buttressing the dominance of Russian culture, the Russian language, etc. The notion of preserving Russia and Russian culture as the center of civilization is in play here.

Agent provocateurs of the special security forces roam the city, recruiting Ukrainians and trying to destabilize the region in order to show how incompetent the administration is. For a long time the BSF has acted as if Sevastopol was *de facto* under Russian jurisdiction, ignoring Ukrainian legislation and sovereignty. Leased military installations, officially said to be oversized for a "modern navy" (the Black Sea Fleet is anything but), have been converted into some kind of commercial enterprises. Thus, an additional flow of money pours in to shore up support of the inhabitants, to whom tens of thousands of Russian passports have been issued in recent years.

Playing on the narrative of the heroism of Sevastopol in Russian and Soviet history, "a valiant sea-port that struggled to secure its future far beyond the heart of Russia; an outpost of Russian civilization on an unruly frontier; and a strategic asset eternally coveted by Russia's enemies,"[2] the Russian Federation is continually taking steps to ensure that "their city" remains as such, despite the technical inconvenience of it being in Ukraine. It is for the reasons enumerated above that, after the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, numerous western political analysts, as well as high-level European politicians like the foreign minister of France, Bernard Kouchner, expressed fears that the Crimea would logically be the next territory targeted by Russia in its quest to re-conquer its close neighbours and return former lands into the Russian world.

Yearning for freedom

Despite all the measures being taken to keep the area under Russian domination, an interesting phenomenon has been developing. From outside, one should be careful not to make the neophyte's mistake of confusing speaking Russian and consumption of Russian culture as a symbol of devotion to Russia. While such a group of people certainly exists, the situation in Ukraine has always been more multifaceted. Many people in Ukraine speak Russian, and a cursory understanding of recent history easily explains this, since during Soviet times the only way to go to university, to advance in a career, to work in government, etc., was to speak Russian. Nonetheless, many of these Russian speakers in Ukraine consider themselves to be pro-Ukrainian and not pro-Russian in their political views. Unfortunately, people often make the mistake of bundling together speakers of the same language into the same political boundaries. Some ethnic Russians in Sevastopol are not necessarily pro-Russian government in their political views, but quite the opposite: they are there because they can live freely, without fear of government oppression, unlike in Russia.

Joint Ukrainian-Russian celebrations on Navy Day, 2012. The Ukrainian command ship U150 is in the background.

In Sevastopol, which basks in its autonomy, the situation is even more complex as there is a segment of the population which is difficult to assess, which speaks Russian yet is loyal not to Russia, but to the autonomous region in which they reside. Sevastopol appeals to their yearning for freedom, a desire that is becoming more difficult to fulfill in the Russian Federation, which is becoming increasingly totalitarian under Vladimir Putin's rule. For this segment of the population, who have to watch what they say and do in Russia, Sevastopol is a breath of fresh air.

However, one cannot put the onus only on the Russian Federation for the state of things in Crimea and Sevastopol, as the Ukrainian government has been sending them mixed signals. In the 1990s, instead of capitalizing on the momentum of a devastated and demoralized Soviet/Russian fleet, to offer better working conditions, housing, etc. and thus win over the hearts and minds of the locals, Ukrainian authorities, either through incompetence, or worse indifference, seemingly did everything to throw the inhabitants back into the embrace of Mother Russia.

Lost potential

Today, one can read of various scenarios proposed by Ukrainian groups ranging from cutting Crimea free along with some parts of the eastern lands in order to have a united Ukraine to the call for the Ukrainization of the region. While the majority of Ukrainians believe that the Autonomous Republic of Crimea should remain in Ukraine, Sevastopol, a bastion of anti-NATO and anti-EU sentiment, despite its great importance to these organizations, remains a city against both. While NATO is no longer a policy objective of the current Ukrainian government, the EU Association Agreement is still a stated objective, however far off it may be.

With the recent extension of Russia's Black Sea Fleet lease until 2042, and the possibility for it to be extended another 5 years, the Yanukovych administration has sent an unambiguous signal to the Russians that Sevastopol is in fact a "Russian city." This is compounded by the fact that Russia has allegedly never paid rent for the BSF, due to a flawed contract signed by President Kuchma in 1997 and the terms of the 2010 extension of the BSF agreement that was supposed to give Ukraine, at the time, a 30% discount on its gas imports, but in reality has the country locked into one of the highest rates in the world, with the added obligation to pay for a set amount, whether it is consumed or not. All this seems to be sending the message that Ukraine too believes that Sevastopol is not part of Ukraine.

Presently, Sevastopol is a land of mismanagement and lost economic, cultural and ultimately political potential. On the one hand, the current military value of the Russian Black Sea Fleet is questionable. However, a major overhaul is in progress, with the addition of new craft every year for the foreseeable future, which will anchor its presence and make it close to impossible to leave one day. On the other hand, the military significance of the Ukrainian Navy in Sevastopol is barely worth mentioning. The true value of Sevastopol for the Russian Federation lies in its national myth, i.e. the city of Russian glory. If the Turks, the British, the French and the Germans could not take it away from Russia, why should the "artificial" nation of Ukraine do so?

Notes

1) Alexander Bogomolov; Oleksandr Lytvynenko: "A Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine". Chatham House Briefing Paper, January 2012, http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0112bp_bogomolov_lytvynenko.pdf.
2) Charles King: "City on the Edge. Is Sevastopol the Next European Flashpoint?" In: *The American Interest* 4, 5 (2009), 61.

Andrej N. Lushnycky, researcher at the Interfaculty Institute of Central and Eastern Europe and director of the American College Program at the University of Fribourg; coeditor of *Ukraine at a Crossroads* (Bern 2005) and *Ukraine on its Meandering Path Between East and West* (Berne 2009); president of the Ukrainian Society in Switzerland.

Ulrich Schmid

Yalta as a Heterotopia

As a historical and as a literary setting, Yalta has become anchored in the European cultural memory as a "place of radical otherness", as a heterotopia. At the Yalta Conference of 1945, a new world order was created in the hope for a better world. The works of Anton Chekhov, too, project a different, better world, particularly those written in Yalta. – R. Z.

The name Yalta sounds macabre to European ears. The city on the Black Sea is associated with two things: firstly there is the conference of February 1945, when Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill thrashed out the post-war European order. And secondly, Yalta was the place in which Anton Chekhov (1860–1904) sought convalescence from his tuberculosis, fleeing the cold, damp climate of Moscow. He would spend the last years of his life in the city on the Black Sea.

Both associations make Yalta a heterotopia as defined by Michel Foucault. Foucault's concept of *heterotopie* implies a place of radical "otherness", a place beyond all other places that form part of thecultural hierarchy of knowledge. Foucault listed six characteristics of heterotopias: firstly, they exist in every culture, since every culture needs a place of retreat for people with a special relationship to society. Secondly, the function of heterotopias changes according to the cultural context. Thirdly, heterotopian spaces can be juxtaposed with one another and can be encoded in manifold ways. Fourthly, heterotopias are linked to slices of time marking a break with traditional biographical mores. Fifthly, heterotopias are complex systems which open and close, regulating access to their space and its penetration. As a sixth principle, heterotopias differ from other spaces in that they either constitute an illusory space or a compensatory heterotopia.[1] These criteria are fulfilled by both the Yalta Conference and the last years of Chekhov's life.

The Yalta Conference

At the end of the Second World War, Yalta was a place of retreat that had been spared the devastation besetting the rest of Europe. Yalta was an ideal place for the conference, since it could not be identified as belonging to the East or the West. The only point of the compass with which it could be associated was south. Yalta was far removed from the epicentre of Stalin's power, on the periphery of the Soviet empire. What made the location heterotopian however was its relation to Europe: Yalta was certainly a European city, yet in concrete terms it did not belong to Eastern, Central or Southern Europe.

For the East Central European nations, Yalta stands for the betrayal of their state sovereignty by England and America. In Yalta, Roosevelt and Churchill accepted Stalin's demands for a Soviet sphere of influence extending as far as the Curzon Line, thus sealing the fate of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. They became what was known during the Cold War as the "Eastern Bloc". Here the limited access to the heterotopia becomes quite clear: the negotiations took place in the absence of those they concerned; only the already shaky alliance of the Great Powers determined the future of the small Central European states, which had only achieved independence after the First World War and were now confronted de facto with a new occupation.

Finally, Yalta had a catalytic function. The Crimean city was not only a heterotopia in its own right, but in the western perspective it also transformed an entire section of Europe with a long tradition of European culture into a heterotopia. The discourse distinguishing between the ordered cultural space of the West and the radical "otherness" of the space in the East is typified by Winston Churchill's famous metaphor in his Westminster College speech of 1946: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended on Europe".[2] Everything that lay behind this curtain was under the demonic influence of Moscow and had thus slipped into a heterotopian space about which one knew very little could say even less.

Chekhov's Yalta

In the life of Chekhov, too, Yalta marks a liminal phase. When Chekhov had a house built for him in Yalta in the summer of 1899, he was at the peak of his fame. This house in the mild Crimean climes would prove both a blessing and a curse. One the one hand, it demonstrated Chekhov's eminent position in the literary world – he had financed the house with the sale of the rights to his narrative works to the publishers Adol'f Marks. On the other hand, Chekhov was cut off from the literary scene in Moscow and found the tedium of the province extremely depressing. In January 1899 he wrote in a letter: "I live in Yalta, and am bored; everything here irritates me, even the fine weather; I would like to go north."[3] A year later he writes: "And I am sick of this lovely city to the point of nausea, like an embittered wife. She cures me of my tuberculosis, but she puts ten years on me."[4] Yet even in this precarious situation he was able to depict the wasteland in literature.

The Three Sisters

It was in Yalta that Chekhov wrote the play *The Three Sisters*, in which the exclamation "To Moscow, to Moscow" features as a leitmotiv – however, the sisters do not manage to realise their idealistic plans. And Chekhov knows that his yearning conscious will also return to itself; he too had a "yearning for Moscow",[5] the northern city becoming a heterotopian retreat in the future. In *The Three Sisters*, a protagonist dreams of a better life in the future: "In two or three hundred, or maybe in a thousand years – it doesn't matter how long exactly – life will be different. It will be happy. Of course, we shan't be able to enjoy that future life, but all the same, what we're living for now is to create it, we work and … yes, we suffer in order to create it. That's the goal of our life, and you might say that's the only happiness we shall ever achieve."[6] The passage precisely reflects Chekhov's condition: he awaits happiness in life, but

not for himself, rather for a future generation. The appropriate space for such expectations is the heterotopia removed from the space of his own happiness.

The Lady with the Dog

Perhaps Chekhov's most obvious literary portrayal of Yalta as a heterotopia is offered by his short story *The Lady with the Dog* (1899). The splendid lovers – a married man and a married woman – are weary of their own spouses and their everyday lives; but both are full of yearning for another, better life. Anna Sergeyevna, the lady with the dog, puts it thus: "I told myself – there is another life. I wanted to live for once. Just to live, to live …! Curiosity gnawed at me … You don't understand, but I swear to God, I could no longer control myself, something had happened to me, there was no longer any stopping me, I told my husband I was ill, and I came here […]"[7] For Gurov, her lover, Yalta also becomes a compensatory heterotopia, offering what his boring life as a Moscow bank clerk cannot: "Sitting next to the young woman, who seemed so beautiful to him in the breaking light, becalmed and enchanted by these fairytale surroundings – the sea, the clouds, the vast sky –, Gurov thought how, when one really considered it, essentially everything in the whole world was beautiful, everything except for that which we think and do ourselves when we forget the higher meaning of our existence and our human dignity."[8] At first the affair seems to be quickly forgotten – upon returning to Moscow Gurov soon immerses himself in city life and its restaurants, clubs and evening engagements. But he is soon reminded of Yalta and the amorous adventure he had there: "What crude morals, what people! Wild card games, boasting and boozing, always these conversations about the same old thing. Unnecessary things and the constant conversations about the same old thing claimed one's best years, one's best energies, and in the end one had nothing left but a mutilated, feeble life, a pointless existence, and one could not leave or take flight, it was as though one was in a madhouse or a penal institution!"[9] During an operatic performance in Moscow, Gurov encounters Anna Sergeyevna once more, and they begin to see each other regularly. Gurov lives a double life – he keeps up the appearance of his societal existence, but puts all his emotional energy into the affair with Anna Sergeyevna: "And he judged others by his own life, he did not believe what he saw and always assumed that every single person's true and most interesting life played out in secret, as if under the cloak of night. Each personal existence survives through a secret, and perhaps that is why a cultivated person makes such a great effort to keep secret that which is most personal."[10] The story ends with an open conclusion: "And it seemed as if it couldn't be long before the solution was found and a new, beautiful life began; and both of them understood very well that the end was a very, very long way off and the greatest difficulties and complications still lay ahead of the them."[11]

In Chekhov's famous story too, Yalta functions as a catalyst. The love experienced in the heterotopia has a lasting impact on life in Moscow. Yalta becomes the code for the true, beautiful life that must also be installed in the dreary day-to-day. In the magazine version of the story, Chekhov had included a denigration of Yalta in the depiction of Gurov's return to Moscow, which was omitted when the story was published as a book: "He cursed the Crimea, Yalta, the Tartars, the women and claimed Switzerland was better."[12] Not even Gurov's subjective delusion is to detract from the picture of Yalta. Chekhov is at pains to rid the ending of all traces of irony – the heterotopia of pure love is obviously an illusion, but at the same time it is an illusion which makes real life bearable.

Statue of Chekhov's *Lady with the Dog* in Yalta.

* * *

Yalta has a demonic but also a joyous mythic potential. Yalta divides Europe and unites lovers. Yalta is a place where that which is known becomes the unknown. In Yalta there is no past, only future. The previous structure of Europe was replaced by a post-war order that has become deeply entrenched in the conscious of the East Central European nations. In Yalta Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna meet like Adam and Eve: entirely without presuppositions and with the prospect of paradisiacal love.

The heterotopia of Yalta is no guarantor of a better world. But that is precisely what the city promises. The fact that this promise of happiness was fulfilled neither for East Central Europe nor for Chekhov is bound up with the almost surreal status of the place. To this day, Yalta radiates the decadent charm of a city removed from real-world geography.

Notes

1) Michel Foucault: "Andere Räume". In: Karlheinz Barck (ed.): *Aisthesis. Wahrnehmung heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik*, Leipzig 1992, pp. 34–46.
2) Winston Churchill: The Iron Curtain. In: David Cannadine (ed.): *Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat. The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, Boston 1989, pp. 303–5.
3) Letter of 19.1.1899. In: Anton Chekhov: *Briefe 1897–1901*, Zurich 1983, p. 111.
4) Letter of 8.1.1900, in: *ibid*., p. 211.
5) Letter of 30.9.1899 , in: *ibid*., p. 182.
6) Anton Chekhov: *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy i pisem v 30 tt*, Moscow 1974–1983, vol. XIII, p. 146. English translation by Elisaveta Fen, in: Anton Chekhov: Plays, London 1954, pp. 247–330 (p. 280).
7) Anton Chekhov: *Die Dame mit dem Hündchen. Erzählungen 1897–1903*, Zurich 1976, p. 256.
8) *Ibid*., p. 258.
9) *Ibid*., p. 262 f.
10) *Ibid*., p. 268 f.
11) *Ibid*., p. 271.
12) Anton Chekhov: Polnoe sobranie sochineniy, vol. VIII, p. 264.

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Schmid, specialist in Russian culture and society and co-director of the Centre for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen.

Galina Michaleva

The Black Sea Palaces of the New Russian Nomenklatura

Like the tsars and the party functionaries before them, the members of the new Russian nomenklatura are building private palaces on the Black Sea coast. Construction projects are realised without any great regard for the interests of the local population or the environment however. In recent years a resistance movement has formed against the exploitation of the environment. – S. K.

As early as in pre-revolutionary days, the Black Sea was a famous recreational and spa resort for affluent Russian citizens from both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. In this region with its picturesque coastline, the Caucasian mountain range and a pleasant subtropical climate there are also a number of dense forests with rare plants, including the relict pine forests unique to the area.

The Russian royal family also regularly spent its summers in the Crimea's Livadia Palace, built as an imperial summer residence under Tsar Alexander II. In the Soviet Union this tradition was continued, in a different form however: the large princely palaces became recreational homes for workers, members of the armed forces and party functionaries. During the Second World War many of these palaces were converted into hospitals. In the Soviet era, the Black Sea was also a destination for many holidaymakers. Those who could not get into a sanatorium or a hotel (both were in short supply) rented a room or lodgings from the locals, for whom the arrangement represented a good source of income. The locals also lived off the sale of fruit and vegetables to the tourists.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Russia and Georgia became new coastal states on the Black Sea. Russia now has a large section of the coast from the Strait of Kerch to the Georgian Cape Pizunda, ca. 400 kilometres. The tradition of spending the family holiday by the Black Sea has largely survived, despite the many offers in Egypt or Turkey, where the prices are lower and the service better. Meanwhile, many new hotels, both large and small, have been built, and rooms and apartments are still let.

Destructive building projects

The new Russian nomenklatura is no exception. Holiday homes as well as large and small palaces are springing up along the coast. With the arrival of money for the construction of Olympic projects in the Krasnodar region, investment in land and new buildings on the coast intensified. Often holders of the highest office prefer conservation areas with access to the sea, however.

Article 6 of the Water Act stipulates that the sea shore and the shores of rivers and lakes are subject to public rights of access. Shores are to have 20 metres of public access, for recreation, fishing etc., even if the land is under private ownership. According to law, no one may fence off shores and prevent access.

But as in many other areas, one group of people considers itself exempt from the universal rules and entitled to act without regard for the law: the elites in the higher positions of power. They build holiday homes on a large scale, cut down trees, erect fences and prevent access to the coast.

The financing of such construction projects is often siphoned off from the official budget, although the palaces are the private property of the most eminent elites, as testified by the reports of the local population as well as construction workers and watchmen. The template for all these new mansions is the Tsar's palace in Livadia. The land for these building plots is usually withdrawn from public use via murky chain purchases and sales and declared private property. De facto it is theft. The plots are guarded either by private security staff or soldiers, with the effect that the shore and the beach are not accessible for the regular citizen.

I list just a few, particularly telling examples:[1]

The ***Patriarch's dacha***: the "dacha" is a large palace with a chapel and meeting hall and is located in Divnomorsk, near the city of Gelendshik in the Krasnodar region. During construction, two hectares of rare pines listed in the encyclopaedia of rare plants were felled. The only safe and convenient route, the "Old Dshantoch Road", leading to a coniferous forest of rare Pizunda pines, one of the Geledshik district's most important sights, was blocked off by a three-metre-high fence. According to official statements issued by the Patriarchate, a Church administrative centre of the Russian Orthodox Church for the south of Russia is to be built here. While it is being built by the Moscow Partriarchate, the Krasnodar region is providing 15 million roubles (ca. 350,000 euros) from its budget.

Putin's dacha in Gelendshik was transformed from state property to private property through a process of several corrupt purchases and sales. 45 hectares of virgin forest were felled for the project, including six hectares of Pizunda pines.

Medvedev's dacha is being built in the "Big Utrish" nature reserve no less, on a site of some 120 hectares. In 2008, the president's administration presented the project as a sports facility with road access.

Serdyukov's dacha: Anatoliy Serdyukov is a former minister of defence (2007–2012) who was relieved of his post for corruption; he and his civil servants currently await trial. The regional government granted the ministry of defence a 9227 m^2 site free of charge, purportedly for the construction of a radar station. Serdyukov's brother-in-law, Valeriy Puzikov, is currently building elite apartments for resale. The entire landscape was transformed during the construction work, the bay was filled with rubble and rare trees were felled.


Photo: rindus.ru

The "Patriarch's dacha" is situated in Divnomorsk by the city of Gelendshik.

Tkachyov's dacha: Alexander Tkachyov, the governor of the Krasnodar region, built his palace on the Blue Bay, near Tuapse. The building area runs to ca. 3000 m². Rare trees were felled, public access to the shores was blocked and a large part of the public forest was fenced off. These are just a few of a great many examples that demonstrate that the following characteristics are typical of the new Russian nomenklatura's embodiment of the merging of power and business:

- They break the law fragrantly and deliberately, as this class also contains lawyers and judges who can be bribed or offered services in return.
- They have complete disregard for the needs and customs of the people; a chasm emerges between the common people and the powerful and the wealthy.
- They conduct business with public funds from the state budget as if they were their own.
- They destroy the environment for their constuction projects without hesitation.

Resistance from Civil Society

Until recently there was hardly any resistance from the populace concerning the development of the Black Sea coast. The internet's speed of dissemination and the activities of NGOs, especially the "Environmental Watchdog on North Caucasus" and "Open Shores", and the social liberal party "Yabloko" have gradually changed the sitation; information on the building projects was collected, examined and distributed on social networks. The party "Yabloko" has distributed several thousand copies of the pamphlet *Black Sea Palaces and their Owners*.[2] 2008 ushered in the active phase of opposition to shoreline development, which involved the following methods:

1) Inspections of fenced-off land, whereby the inspectors enter the site accompanied by the media and report online.
2) Complaints to the state prosecution department and the authorities demanding that they prosecute offences and investigate corruption.
3) The organisation of protests in the Krasnodar region and throughout the country defending the conservation area of Utrish and the Black Sea coast.

The reaction of the elites is contradictory: on the one hand proceedings have begun against the former defence minister Serdyukov and his underlings, although its leniency (he and his deputy have merely been placed under house arrest) rather suggests that he is to serve as a scapegoat and token victim of the fight against corruption. On the other hand there has been no reaction to all the other cases, namely the palaces of Putin, Medvedev and the Patriarchate. At the same time, Tkachyov is doggedly persecuting the party activists and the environmentalists: everyone who lifts the lid on stories of environmental damage and corruption is regularly arrested. The most renowned environmentalists and members of Yabloko, Evgeniy Vitishko and Sergey Gazaryan, were given two years' probation. After a second round of proceedings were opened, Gazaryan requested political asylum in Estonia, which was granted recently.

The "Black Sea palaces" are on the one hand an example of the shameless appropriation of public property by the new Russian nomenklatura and on the other hand they are an example of the growing readiness of an active part of society to offer resistance. The passing of the NGO law in the spring of 2013 (see RGOW 5/2013, p. 6) threatens to put a stop to these activities. The most important environmental NGOs, including the Environmental Watchdog on North Caucasus, generally obtain funds from European trusts and the new law states that they must now become registered as "foreign agents" or pay draconian fines. Additionally, for the Russian public, the term "foreign agent" equates to a spy or a traitor. Presently, many environmental organisations are being audited, thus paralysing their work as a whole.

As far as the common citizens are concerned, they are forced to give up their familiar recreational sites and witness before their own eyes the destruction of the unique nature reserves of the North Caucasus and the Black Sea. The modern Russian leadership is steadfastly pursuing anti-ecological policies.[3] These policies are not just connected to great "patriotic goals", like the Olympic buildings in Sochi, rather they are – more frequently – rooted in the greed and ambitions of the holders of high office, including the foremost representatives of the state. These are the same politicians who every day on television attempt to convince the citizens that they are for the welfare of the country and its people. The gulf between the television pictures and the reality is only increasing however. Anger is on the rise, since the government's lies and its enrichment go hand in hand with flagrant violations of laws and rights and an appreciable decline in the quality of life. The outrage and anger are bound to find their expression at some point. The question is only how long the erosion of Russia's authoritarian regime will take. Many natural phenomena, however, can no longer be saved.

Notes

1) This article draws on the publications of the website of the party "Yabloko (www.yabloko.ru) and the NGOS "Free Shores" (http://openbereg.ru) and "Environmental Watchdog Watchdog on North Caucasus" (http://sundry.wmsite.ru/pravozaschita/ekologiches-kaja-vahta-po-severnomu-kavkazu/).
2) http://www.yabloko.ru/books/Chernomorskie_dvortsy_mod.pdf.
3) Alexej Yablokov: "The De-Ekologization of Russia. Causes and Effects". In: Galina Michaleva; Andrej Rybov, (eds.): *Russian Challenges. Between Freedom and Energy*, Berne 2011, pp. 103–116.

Dr. habil. Galina Michaleva, Professor at the Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow; lecturer at the University of Bremen.

Timothy Blauvelt

Sukhum(i): Multi-Ethnic Capital of the Soviet Riviera

Abkhazia's capital, Sukhumi, was once a multiethnic city, before the Abkhaz-Georgian War in the early 1990s brought about the violent transformation of the urban population. Today a certain normality has returned to Sukhumi and the scars of war are barely visible, but there remains the feeling that its multiethnic past has been lost. – S. K.

The visitor to contemporary Sukhumi cannot help but be struck by a sense of contrast between the serene beauty and tranquility of the place and its nature on the one hand and the sense that something is missing on the other. It is a small, sunny town with lush, subtropical flora and quaint nineteenth-century architecture. The stunning Black Sea coast, embankment and port dominate one side, and the enthralling white peaks of the Caucasus mountains rise up to the horizon on the other. Anton Chekhov's description from the turn of the last century is still evocative:

> *The nature is surprising to a degree of madness and distraction. Everything is novel, fantasy-like, silly and poetic. Eucalyptus trees, tea shrubs, cypresses, cedars, palm trees, donkeys, swans, water buffalo, grey cranes, and, most importantly, mountains, mountains and more mountains, without end or limit. If I lived in Abkhazia for even one month, I would write fifty or more enchanting stories. From behind each shrub, from every shadow and half-shadow in the mountains, from the sea and from the sky there peer out thousands of story-lines. I am an ass for not being able to draw!*

The city's history

The roots of the city go back to antiquity, at least to the sixth century BC, when it was the Greek colony of Dioscuria, and then a Roman trading settlement called Sebastopolis. After being sacked by Arab conquerors in the eighth century, it became the capital of an Abkhazian kingdom during the Middle Ages that was linked to the Georgian realm, when it was known as Tskhum (the name still used by the Georgian Patriarchy). The city fell to the Turks in 1578, who renamed the city Sohum Kale and rebuilt the fortress there in 1724 (the inscription plaque now stands in the yard of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul). The Abkhaz Shervashidze (Chachba) princes governed the principality of Abkhazia as Turkish vassals from 1789 until 1810, when they made overtures to the Russians. Tsarist rule in Abkhazia, as in some of the other Georgian principalities, remained indirect until the end of the Caucasus wars against the North Caucasian mountaineers and the dissolution of the Shervashidze dynasty in 1864. Abkhazia was then subsumed as a district of the Kutaisi *guberniia*. Following the Russian revolutions of 1917, Abkhazia was declared a Soviet Socialist Republic in March 1921, with the Abkhaz as the "titular" nationality as a reward for their support of the Bolsheviks in the "Sovietization" of Georgia and the overthrow of the government of the Georgian Democratic Republic. The formal status of the republic was downgraded a year later to that of a "treaty republic" that entered the newly formed Transcaucasian Federative Socialist Republic through Georgia, and still further to an ordinary Autonomous Republic of Georgia in February 1931. All throughout, Sukhumi served as the capital city and regional hub.

Chekhov had set scenes from his story "The Duel" on the idyllic Sukhumi embankment, a location often returned to in the stories of the Abkhaz writer Fazil Iskander. Lev Trotsky, tricked by Stalin into remaining in Sukhumi and missing Lenin's funeral in January 1924, delivered an impassioned speech here from the balcony of the Hotel Ritsa. Trotsky's absence from the funeral was viewed by later historians as a key blunder that cost him the leadership succession struggle and allowed the advancement of Stalin (E.H. Carr used this as an example of the role of the accidental in history, his "Cleopatra's nose" factor, in his classic *What is History?*).

Conflicts between Abkhaz and Georgians

Today, two decades after the brutal Abkhaz-Georgian war, the physical effects of that conflict are still evident in the burnt-out shells of the government building and the Hotel Abkhazia, and the many remaining overgrown empty lots in the city center and elsewhere. There is an eerie sense of lacking, of emptiness and something missing, of the part of the population that has vanished. According to the official censuses, the population of Sukhumi decreased fully by half between 1991 and 2011 (from 120,000 to about 62,000 persons).

It is not an exaggeration to state that Abkhazia's modern history has been driven by the factors of geography and demography, refracted through the prism of Soviet nationality policy.

The history of Abkhazia and the "ethnogenesis" of its inhabitants became fiercely contested during the latter half of the Soviet period – the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict was fought by historians and ethnographers long before the soldiers and insurgents began shooting. Even the origins of the name "Sukhumi" became part of the debate, with Georgians claiming that it comes from variants of words in their languages (an outside argument links Suhum to "sea" and "land in Turkish). Although there is a separate Abkhaz name "Akua", the addition or subtraction of the Georgian "i" nominative ending to "Sukhumi" became a politicized issue.

Sometimes called the "Soviet Riviera," or the "Soviet Florida," Abkhazia was one of the most ethnically diverse regions of the Russian and Soviet empires (one Party

functionary described it in the mid-1920s as a "Comintern in miniature"), and Sukhumi was the point of intersection. The Abkhaz are ethnically and linguistically more closely related to the Adigei and Abaza in the North Caucasus than to the Georgians, whose language belongs to the entirely separate Kartvelian language family. Under Tsarist rule much of the Abkhaz population left for Ottoman Turkey in the 1860s and 1870s, leaving the region severely underpopulated. Subsequently, large numbers of Mingrelians, a Georgian ethnic subgroup speaking a Kartvelian language, resettled in Abkhazia from the neighboring region of Mingrelia (*Samegrelo*), particularly in Abkhazia's southernmost district, known as Samurzaqano or Gali. This in-migration of Mingrelian Georgians intensified during the collectivization campaign and the development of large-scale state citrus and tobacco farming in the Soviet period. Yet these ethnic identities at different points in history have been more fluid than they might seem in retrospect: Mingrelians would classify themselves as Abkhaz at times when that identity was more beneficial, and vice-versa.

Although they held the key government positions, the ethnic Abkhaz were a minority in their own republic, and they were also overwhelmingly rural. According to the 1959 census, for example, Abkhaz made up only 5.6% of the population of Sukhumi. Ethnic Georgians made up the plurality of the population, and were also largely rural. Ethnic Russians made up a tiny proportion of the overall population, but they made up a very large percentage of the urban population, particularly in Sukhumi (with 36.8% in 1959, for example, they made up the plurality of the city's population, with ethnic Georgians the second largest group, comprising 31.1%). The ethnic groups tended to be differentiated by occupation, with tobacco farming and trade in the towns conducted primarily by Greeks and Armenians, (although Georgians and Abkhazians took up tobacco production by the early 1920s), and the administration and clerical jobs were held by Russians. Abkhazians and Georgians were involved mainly in other types of agriculture or subsistence farming. During the high Stalin era Georgians had advantages in jobs and in leadership positions, while in the post-Stalin period the Abkhaz were able to solidify their place in administrative positions and in the running of the lucrative seaside resorts. During their periods of ascendency, Abkhaz leaders often formed a strategic alliance with the urban Russians to prevent being subsumed by the Georgians. Russian was (and remains) the *lingua franca* both of government administration and of inter-ethnic commerce in Sukhumi.

Ethnic grievances accumulated during the decades of Soviet rule: the Abkhaz resented the Georgians for the Stalin-era "Georgification" policies, and then the Georgians resented the perceived privileges that the Abkhaz received as the titular nationality in the republic in the decades following. These grievances boiled over with the openness of Glasnost, and Sukhumi became the center of political contestation between the two ethnic groups under Perestroika, with demonstrations being met with counter-demonstrations that (egged on by nationalist intellectuals, such as the above-mentioned historians and ethnographers) often resulted in escalating street violence. Despite (or perhaps because of) the level of interaction between Georgians and Abkhaz in Sukhumi over the preceding century, with some exceptions this was not enough to overcome the fear and rage that took hold when the Soviet edifice collapsed and open conflict broke out in August 1992. The small Abkhaz population of the city initially fled north to Gagra and Gudauta, and Sukhumi became the center of the Georgian military effort and was held by the Georgians until the very end of the conflict in September 1993, when the Abkhaz forces broke a cease-fire and seized the city with the help of the Russian military. The Georgian population was forced to flee Abkhazia, and although many of the Georgian residents of the southern Gali region eventually returned, the Georgians from Sukhumi were never able to do so, and their properties either remain desolate or have been taken over by new residents.

Photo: Marietta König

The remains of Hotel Abkhazia.

Lost diversity

Demography and geography continued to be key factors in blocking resolution to the conflict. Territorial settlements involving conceding the Georgian-populated Gali region could never be considered seriously by the Georgians so long as Sukhumi was excluded, while for the Abkhaz allowing the return of the Georgian IDPs to their homes in the capital would have made them an insecure minority again. Ideas for a territorial compromise with Sukhumi as a divided city like Jerusalem were thrown around from time to time, but apparently never taken very seriously by either side.

Recognition as an independent state by Russia and a handful of other countries following the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008 has all but settled the question of status as far as the Abkhaz are concerned, and have added a sense of stability that has led to increased investment and tourism from Russia and to a consolidation of local statehood (including a democratic transition of power through elections). While the tourists are primarily drawn to the resort towns of Pitsunda and Gagra to the north and the monastery and cave complex at Novy Afon, the Sukhumi embankment swarms with holidaymakers in the summer period. Preparations for the upcoming 2014 Olympics in nearby Sochi have also given the local economy a boost.

Except for the still-charred remains of the shelled-out government building, Sukhumi has regained the charm and pleasantness that so enthralled Chekhov. Yet a much different Sukhumi exists in the memory and imagination of those forced to leave, and for whom it is so close yet entirely (and seemingly eternally) inaccessible. A new generation of Georgian IDPs with no firsthand experience of Abkhazia is now reaching adulthood. The Abkhaz, in turn, have gained security and political control, yet in sacrificing its diversity the city has sacrificed one of the key aspects of its vibrancy.

Timothy K. Blauvelt, PhD, Associate Professor for Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies at Ilia State University, Tbilisi.

Giga Zedania

Batumi: the Sea and Modernity

Batumi was founded in antiquity as a Greek colony and throughout its history it has constantly been subject to changing influences, shaped by oriental and western, Islamic and Christian elements. After the Rose Revolution of 2003, Batumi was at the centre of an ambition modernisation project launched by Mikheil Saakashwili's government. The project brought some benefits, but ultimately failed due to the resistance of the local population. – S. K.

Batumi is a city which brings the images of the old and the new to mind simultaneously. The name, derived from the Greek "bathus limen", meaning deep harbor, refers to a place with a rich history in antiquity. But Batumi is also a city the face of which has been radically changed during the past nine years: it was supposed to be the symbol of the modernization project undertaken by the revolutionary government. How do the old and the new, the traditional and the modern (and even the post-modern), the Oriental and the Western, the Islamic and the Christian elements meet with each other, merge with each other? Do they form a whole of a vibrant city or do they remain fragments destined for tensions and conflicts?

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The main street in Batumi.

First of all, Batumi is a multi-layered city, showing strata of antique Greek, medieval Byzantine, early modern Ottoman, nineteenth-century Russian and twentieth-century Soviet civilizations. Like many maritime cities, it was a place of diverse cultural, religious or ethnic confluences. For a country surrounded by powerful land neighbors, the sea was a principle of openness.

Changing rulers

In the history of Georgia, the sea is the contrasting principle to that of the mountains. The social life as reflected and transformed in literature shows this rather clearly. Bandits and outlaws – the usual heroes of the nineteenth-century nationalist literature directed against the domination of the Russian empire – have different opportunities depending on the territories where they operate. In mountains, as described by Alexander Kazbegi in his nineteenth-century novels, they do not have any way out; they are trapped between the mountains and the Russian troops advancing from the North to the South to control them. In *Matsi Khvitia*, a novel by Anton Purtseladze about the outlaw from western Georgia, there is a window, an opening which comes through the sea; interestingly enough it is a French lawyer who is able to defend the hero convincingly in court. The Black Sea was not as open as it could have been: for many centuries it was the inner lake of the Ottoman Empire; the Russian Empire aspired to take it from the Turks, but not in order to change its status. Still, its liberating influence was strong, especially after Batumi was declared an open port in 1878, which lead to the development of infrastructure and the growth of the city.

This was reflected in new projects linking the Caspian Sea with the Black Sea. The world's longest kerosene pipeline constructed in 1906 between Baku and Batumi gave it the strategic function of a transit station for the distribution of Caspian Sea oil to the outside world. This role has remained intact even after a century: the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline opened in 1998 still uses parts of the old route.

In 1921 the Kars Treaty gave Batumi to the Soviet power. Thereafter the Turkish influence started to diminish significantly. It was kept on the level of unconscious everyday habits and cuisine, but socially and culturally the region was to be changed significantly during the coming Soviet decades. In 1973 Otar Chiladze published an important novel, *A Man Went Down the Road*, the opening scene of which described how the sea retreats from a small fictionalized Georgian city. However this image was intended by the author, who was writing in the vein of the then popular magic realism, it corresponded well with the political closing off of the Black Sea by the Soviet government. The region bordering with Turkey was guarded from the 'detrimental influence of capitalism', but alongside the official communist propaganda there was another semi-official but equally influential discourse

centered on ethnic nationalism and nationalistically interpreted Christian religiosity which was not less wary of the outside influences.

Modernisation projects in Adjara

Batumi's contemporary history begins with the breaking up of the Soviet Union in 1991. But the closed territory was not fully opened: the authoritarian ruler, Aslan Abashidze, made Adjara almost impermeable to the control of the Georgian central government residing in Tbilisi. Adjara never went as far as the two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which declared their independence. Still, it was not until 2004, after its liberation from Abashidze, that Batumi came under the control of the central government. This released a tremendous energy to completely change the face of the city. This energy resided, however, mainly in the political class and the project took the form of "modernization from above".

The new revolutionary government declared Batumi as the symbol of the renewed and modernized Georgia. There were many reasons for this choice: its being an excellent touristic destination was one of them. But there were others: to develop the maritime region under Georgian control was to create soft power vis-à-vis the neighboring breakaway region of Abkhazia. It was also to counter the resistance of traditional societal and cultural elites of Tbilisi to the revolutionary government by displacing the modernizing zeal to other parts of Georgia. But the modernization project of Batumi was not greeted with jubilance. During an impressive project involving the renovation of old buildings and the construction of new hotels, there was frequent critique of the obliteration of the historical face of the city by buildings of dubious aesthetic value.

A place of tensions

With the full opening to the outside world, Batumi has also become a site of tensions between Islam and Christianity. Adjara, having been part of the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, has always been an exception in the country, since the majority of the population there was ethnically Georgian but religiously Muslim. The renaissance of Orthodox Christianity in Georgia during the last years of the Soviet Union and in the post-soviet decades has brought with it a wave of conversions from Islam to Christianity in Adjara. The identity formula offered by the Orthodox Georgian Church and accepted by many Georgians – "to be Georgian means to be Orthodox" – was the driving force behind this process of conversion. Still, Islam is strong, especially in the mountainous regions of Adjara and together with the influx of Turkish capital this has given rise to a certain resentment on the side of the impoverished local population, which has linked religion and nationalism. Protests against the plan of the revolutionary government to construct a new mosque in Batumi in 2012 and the significant electoral impact of these protests have shown that the religious and ethnic tensions could become challenges for the region in the foreseeable future.

Thus the modernization project in Batumi was faced with obstacles. That is where the project of transforming Batumi was changed into the project of founding a new city. Imitating Atatürk, who moved the capital from Istanbul to Ankara, to diminish the influence of the societal elites on politics, Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia's president since 2004, moved the parliament away from Tbilisi, characteristically enough to the city of Kutaisi in the Western part of Georgia; possibly emulating Peter the Great who founded Petersburg as the "window to Europe", Saakashvili proposed founding a new city, Lazika. In December 2011he announced the project – of building the second-largest city in the country on the shores of the Black Sea. Whatever the rationale behind the phantasmagoric project (one could argue that, if serious modernization process is to take place, the situation should be changed from one in which more than half of the country's population resides in rural areas and lives off a rural subsistence economy), it was the expression of the tacit acceptance of the fact that Batumi's transformation had reached its limits. In October 2012 Saakashvili's party lost in the elections (incidentally, in Batumi the defeat of the ruling party was especially convincing).It is most likely that Lazika will remain a paper project, never to become reality.


Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Statue of Medea with the Golden Fleece in Batumi.

But Batumi will stay; this is a city which can withstand the interference from above; the sea, the old ambience of the city, newly constructed buildings and renovated infrastructure attract many visitors every year, especially from the region, but from more distant countries too. Spontaneous development of the city seems to prevail over the plans of the holders of political power, whatever their intentions. However, whether the process of chasing after the phantasm of unifying and homogenous traditions will not harm the prospects of developing a vibrant multicultural city remains to be seen.

Professor Dr. *Giga Zedania*, director of the Institute for Research on Modernism at Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Coordinator of the *Academic Swiss Caucasus Net (ASCN)* in Georgia.

Alexander Iskandarjan

From the historical past to the political future: Armenia's potential for a black sea identity

Historically, Armenia has many connections with the Black Sea, but the land-locked country in the Caucasus is presently marked by a feeling of being cut off. The yearning for the Black Sea felt by many Armenians reflects the yearning of the country to be recognised as a European country. – S. K.

In June 2004, a sailing ship called *Cilicia* left port and began its two-year tour of Europe. An exact replica of a merchant ship that sailed under the flag of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia in the thirteenth century, the *Cilicia* was built by a group of enthusiasts from the modern Republic of Armenia – a landlocked country in the highlands. The self-made Armenian seafarers and shipbuilders started their work back in the mid-1980s, very slowly crafting, from surviving blueprints and witness accounts, parts of the once state-of-the-art vessel. Once the ship was ready and furnished, it was transported to the shores of Lake Sevan, a mountain lake in Armenia, and launched there. Inspired by the nationwide popularity of their endeavor, the crew of *Cilicia* established a sailing club, called it Ayas after a port in the Kingdom of Cilicia, and began making plans and raising funds to implement the seemingly insane project of sailing all around Europe in their medieval sailboat. As often happens with enthusiasts, the project was successful; the funds were collected, the trip planned, and a vessel just five meters wide and twenty meters long set sail from a port in neighboring Georgia, and went around Europe in two years. Fans in Armenia followed the route with bated breath, applauding every arrival to port from Venice to Portsmouth, from Athens to St Petersburg.

It may well be that the sailing project, and the public and media attention it enjoyed, were reflections of the longing for sea and naval travel experienced by a nation that lives in a corner of a highland island historically known as the Armenian Plateau. The fact that the Armenians like to look back at the only time in their history when they were a seafaring nation is no surprise for a landlocked country. As for the glorious *Cilicia,* it is still moored on Lake Sevan, serving as a tourist attraction, although its hourly renting rates are rather high since it takes six sailors to man it.

Yearning for the Black Sea coast

The Kingdom of Cilicia was once located on the Mediterranean, on what is now the southern coast of Turkey. Facing Cyprus, the surviving picturesque ruins of Cilician fortresses, churches and villages still bear witness to the medieval history of those lands. As for the modern replica ship, it did not set sail from the Mediterranean, but from the Black Sea – the Georgian port of Poti was the *Cilicia's* point of departure and final destination. The choice of port was natural and, in fact, very limited, because Armenia and Turkey do not have diplomatic ties, besides which the Cilician coast on the Mediterranean is much too far for transporting a boat by land.

It is via the Georgian Black Sea ports – Batumi and Poti – that Armenia sustains communication and trade with the European Union, its largest trade partner. In fact, about two thirds of Armenia's trade turnover with the rest of the world comes via Georgia. However, for most Armenians the Black Sea coast is much more than just a stopover on a transit route. In Soviet mythology, the shores of the Black Sea had come to symbolize summer resorts, summer vacations, and leisure in general. The city of Sochi on the Russian stretch of the coast was the embodiment of this great felicity. Even the young generation of Armenians who never went there might still use the word "Sochi" as a synonym for a kind of modern Arcadia. In the hermetically sealed Soviet Union, the Black Sea coast was indeed the richest and most luxuriant area that one could hope to spend one's vacations in. The Black Sea coast was situated on the southern extremity of the USSR; it was the only place with relatively nice beaches and a humid sub-tropical climate in which citrus fruits could be grown. And of course, lemons and tangerines were the stuff of dreams for the population of the vast northern country.

Had Soviet borders been open for Soviet citizens, the Black Sea coast would have had to compete with other resort locations. With the borders sealed, almost every person who lived in the USSR had either been to the Black Sea at least once in their life or at least dreamed of going there. This held quite true for the Armenians; although from the Russian perspective Armenia was just as southern a republic as Georgia, it did not have a seashore.

Of course, now that the borders are open, Armenians are free to come and go, choosing any holiday destination from Egypt to Spain. However, for medium-income families from a country that is not all that affluent, the Georgian Black Sea coast still has its attractions. First of all, it is the most accessible, since there is no need to board a flight: one day is all it takes to get there by bus or car. Prices are affordable; for the older generation, the absence of a language barrier also matters: in the coastal parts of Georgia, the Soviet *lingua franca*, Russian, is still spoken and understood. Young people are learning to communicate in English, and market mechanisms are at work: during the short holiday season, Armenian-speaking staff are hired by many of the coastal resorts and diners. In a way, Armenians are cultivating this coast, making it their own, especially since the Black Sea had never been something entirely foreign to them.

Indeed, quite a few of the cities located on the shores of the Black Sea have been touched by Armenian culture. Armenians have made their input into the construction and development of Theodosia (the medieval Caffa), Stary Krym, Batumi, Sukhumi, Gagra, Trabzon, Istanbul and Burgàs, to name a few. All these places form part of Armenian history and are perceived by the Armenians as having direct relevance to Armenian culture. The painter Ivan (Hovhannes) Aivazovsky, one of the world's most renowned marine artists of the nineteenth century, was of

Armenian descent. Although he lived his whole life in Theodosia, painting the Black Sea, and never visited his ethnic homeland, the Armenians are still proud of him and his work. The early twentieth-century constellation of Armenian poets in Istanbul was obliterated by the 1915 Genocide but their oeuvre survives, most of it in school textbooks used in modern Armenia. The Armenian community of Varna continues its existence, whereas Grigoriopol is gone from the map of Moldova, but Armenian schoolchildren are familiar with both city names from history lessons.

Feeling cut off

However, despite all this historical fabric, all the networks and ties, Armenia does not perceive itself as a Black Sea country; in fact, it perceives itself as exactly the opposite – a landlocked, isolated place, far away from the rest of the world, cut off from Europe and the general European cultural realm. This worldview is extremely common among modern Armenians. Ironically, a nation that naturally belonged to the worlds of Ancient Greece and Rome, of Hellenism and Byzantium, has ended up centuries later in an entirely different cultural space. It no longer counts the Greeks, Romans or Genoese as its neighbors. Instead, in the Russian and Soviet empires, Armenians got used to the idea that Estonia and St. Petersburg were psychologically closer than, for example, Turkey or Iran. Since foreign travel in the USSR was centralized, Moscow was perceived as the gate to the external world, whereas Armenia's immediate geographical neighbors felt infinitely distant since there was no way to make contact with them. Even a place like Prague was easier to reach via Moscow than Tehran. With the disintegration of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact, things fell back into perspective: Prague "returned" to the heart of Europe where it belonged, and Iran turned out to be within a stone's throw.

As a result, the modern Armenians' geographical and cultural identities are misaligned. Visitors from Iran do not encounter hostility in Armenia; however, there is no overlap of identities: the Iranians are definitely "others." The only people Armenians can identify with are Europeans (perhaps the Southern kind). And in the eyes of Iranian tourists, too, Armenia is a kind of Europe albeit with low prices and conveniently close by; Iranians can even reach it by bus. For them, Yerevan is just as good as Paris in the sense that its cafés serve alcohol and play music, and that women are free to remove their burqas. Identification with Europe may be another reason for the Armenians' longing for Cilicia. The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, bordering on the Crusaders' kingdoms, formed part of the medieval European world, with dynastic marriages to European princesses, the Italian colonies in the sea ports, the French dynasties, and the universal use of Latin. It may be that Armenia has a secret, unconscious yearning to reach the Black Sea and sail in wider waters. Although it was never the subject of public discussion, it is symbolic that Armenia's most internationally successful jazz folk band is called The Armenian Navy Band. It is by no means a coincidence that this band is lead by a musician from Istanbul, from the Black Sea shore.

A shared region

We can thus say that Armenia's historical ties to the Black Sea go back a long way and have been implemented and represented in its ethnic culture. However, geography matters at least as much as history, and arguably more so. The Caucasus is, in fact, an isthmus between Europe and Asia – from East to West as well as from North to South. This means that a thousand threads tie Armenia to the sea. For example, Armenia is now building what will certainly become its most important road: a transnational highway, the first modern highway in the country. When operational, it will become an integral part of a huge transportation corridor between

The *Cilicia* is an exact replica of a medieval Armenian merchant ship.

the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea, via the territories of Armenia and Georgia – part of a ferry route from India to Europe. The 550-kilometer stretch of highway across Armenia and Georgia will be built by 2017. The highway will reach the port of Poti, from which goods will be shipped to Europe via Constanța in Romania and Varna in Bulgaria. The Black Sea will become geographically closer as a result: the highway will shorten the trip to Batumi from Yerevan roughly by half. The psychological proximity will also increase, because the construction is the joint endeavor of the two neighboring countries.

Armenia is a founding member of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Interestingly, the Armenian representative in BSEC is based in Istanbul, which makes him the only permanent representative of the Republic of Armenia on the territory of the Turkish Republic, since, in the absence of diplomatic ties, the two countries do not have embassies. One cannot call the BSEC a very successful project, if only because the Black Sea area is so heterogeneous. In contrast to, for example, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea has historically been more of a dividing than a uniting entity. Even now, coastal nations include EU members Romania and Bulgaria; the huge and often competitive Russia and Turkey; Georgia and Moldova, Ukraine with Crimea and Odessa, and even the tiny de-facto state of Abkhazia. It is not easy to consider this multi-level mix a region if by "region" we mean a territory brought together by more than geography.

However, ultimately, a region is what we call a region and regard as a region. Despite common perceptions to the contrary, there is no such thing as a "natural region." Europe and Asia, too, were invented, or constructed, albeit a long time ago. The Black Sea can also be invented as a region; at least, this is something both its Western and Eastern coasts want. To its West coast, the new region would provide a way to establish a new beachhead by extending itself into the peninsula formed by the new independent states of the former Soviet South. For the East coast, belonging to the Black Sea region would create an opportunity to identify with Europe: a symbol of a European homecoming. For Armenia, this may be especially true, as belonging to the Black Sea region can gratify Armenia's need of belonging to Europe, being a European country.

Alexander Iskandarjan, political analyst and director of the Caucasus Institute in Jerewan.

Faruk Bilici

Trabzon: Province or Commercial Hub?

Once a flourishing, multicultural trade city, today Trabzon is considered a backward stronghold of conservative Turkish nationalism and Islamism. If the economic potential of the Black Sea region is realised, the city could benefit from the connection to world of modern commerce. – R. Z.

Located on the Black Sea in the northeast of Anatolia, in 1204 Trabzon (Trebizond) was chosen as the capital of the Empire of Trebizond (Pontus), which existed until 1461 under the Byzantine dynasty of the Komnenoi. As a Greek, then Venetian and Genoan trading settlement, Trabzon owed its wealth under Byzantine and Trebizondian rule to the trade route from Central Asia and Iran.[1]

Ottoman rule

When the city was conquered by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (1444–1446, 1451–1481) in 1461, its population stood at an estimated 4000 or 5000, for the most part Greek Orthodox, but also comprising two important minorities, the Armenians and the Latini (Genoese and Venetians). After the Ottoman conquest, the last Komnenos, David, was banished from the city together with his family and some of the most influential aristocrats. Important churches such as the Chrysokephalos Church, St. Eugenios's and St. Sophia's were rebuilt as mosques and renamed Atik Cami, Yeni Cami (later Yeni Cuma) and Aya Sofya (a museum since 1964). While several monastic estates were converted into Ottoman manors (*timâr*), the three monasteries of Vazelon, Soumela and La Peristera in the Maçka (Maçuka) Valley were able to retain their function and a large part of their estates well into the twentieth century.

Following the Ottoman conquest, Trabzon became the main city of a *sancak* (district) and underwent a certain Islamisation. A census of 1486 counted, out of a total population of 6,711 within its walls, 1,290 Turkish Muslims (19.22%), who had been deported from the neighbouring regions of Samsun, Niksar, Tokat, Merzifon, Lâdik, Çorum, etc. The large majority were Christians (80.78%), with 5,421 persons in 15 quarters, mainly in the eastern and southern suburbs. 4,373 of these Christians were Greek Orthodox (65.16%), 838 Armenian Orthodox (12.49%) and 210 Catholic Latini (3.13%) – Genoese and Venetians.[2]

The significance of the role played by the Ottomans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in this strategic region between Iran and the Black Sea is demonstrated by the nomination of the princes Abdullah and Selim as city governors under Sultan Bayezid II (1481–1512). Trabzon was a base and an important outpost for the transit of soldiers and military material. Born in Trabzon in 1494, the future Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–1566) made Trabzon the capital of a province that included Georgian and Abkhazia. In the sixteenth century, the city's affluence continued to grow, as not only the population but also the Islamisation increased. The census of 1583 recorded a total population of almost 10,500, of whom 54% were Muslim and 46% Christian.

But in the late sixteenth and in the early seventeenth centuries, Trabzon's importance began to wane as a consequence of the wars between the Ottomans and the Persians.[3] In the eighteenth century, rivalries between the South Caucasian Laz, the Old Turkic Chepni and the Georgians led to the development of heavily armed local feudal rule. While the Pashas were able to establish a certain stability in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, throughout the nineteenth century the region was overrun by battles between the various factions and governmental forces, not to mention the ambitions of Russia, which annexed the Caucasus in 1878 and the three Ottoman provinces (*vilayet*) in the immediate proximity of Trabzon, Batumi, Kars and Ardahan, in 1917.

While in the early nineteenth century France and Russia established the first consulates in Trabzon, in 1826 the British created the necessary conditions for active trade with the East Anatolian city of Erzurum and the Persian city of Tabriz via Trabzon. Persian silk and Anatolian hazelnuts were delivered to the European markets, while refined sugar, textiles, paper and Belgian weapons came from Britain. In 1900 commercial activity increased due to the 487 steamships transporting 522,000 tonnes of goods on the Black Sea, in addition to the thousands of sailing vessels.[4]

Decline into provinciality

When Russia took Batumi following the Ottoman defeat of 1878, Trabzon underwent a steady decline. In 1883, Batumi became a city with great potential, with the construction of a port, a railway to Baku via Tiflis and an oil pipeline to Baku. Trabzon was left out in the cold. With a population of 35,000 at the end of the nineteenth century and 40–45,000 at the beginning of the twentieth, Trabzon was occupied by Russia in April 1916. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk saw the city returned to Turkey on April 24, 1918. After the First World War, Trabzon was very much in the sights of the Pontic Greeks and the Armenians. The Treaty of Sèvres (1920) gave Trabzon to Armenia, but Turkey's victory over Greece and the ensuing Treaty of Lausanne (July 24, 1923) saw this annulled. The city underwent profound demographic transformation when the Orthodox population in Turkey (outside of Istanbul) was exchanged for the Muslims in Greece (with the exception of East Thrace) (see RGOW 6/2013, 22–4).

What in the Ottoman context had been a "natural" Islamisation with everything that implies became – with the blessing of the great and lesser powers in Lausanne (1923) – forced ethnic and religious cleansing. Indeed, history was accelerated: first the Armenian population of Trabzon was deported and eliminated by the Ottoman "special organisation" between 1915 and 1923,

and then the Greek Orthodox were exchanged for the Turkish Muslims.

This process of Islamisation and Turkification in Trabzn also involved the alteration of place names. The Young Turks began the campaign in 1916: a decree issued during the war by the then war minister Enver Pasha (1881–1922) on January 5, 1916, stipulated that all Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian and indeed all non-Islamic names for towns, castles, villages, mountains and rivers were to be Turkified and given a name glorifying the work, military victories and the Turkish names of "honest" people who had died "serving their country".[5]

In the republican period this process was further accelerated, particularly between 1950 and 1970 in order to systematically replace Greek or other (Laz, Armenian) names – often without any relation to the original name (e.g. Greek *Alisinos* became Turkish *Uzuntarla*).[6] In 1973 77% of 562 towns and villages still had their old, in most cases Greek, names.[7] In certain districts such as Çaykara, Of or Maçka, almost all the villages retained their Greek names, whereas in others, particularly in the west of the country, only 32% (Beşikdüzü), 20% (Vakfikebir) or indeed only 14% (Çarşıbaşı (Iskefiye)) did. These transformations seem to have been enforced somewhat arbitrarily. A law of June 21, 1934 also demanded the substitution of "foreign" family names with Turkish ones. This led to the official disappearance of a whole series of Pontic family names, some of them famous. In everyday life, however, they continued to be used.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Trabzon's importance was further reduced by the construction of several ports in Iran, the closure of the Turkish-Georgian border in 1937 and the construction of a railway line from Ankara to Erzurum in 1939.


Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The Church of St. Eugenios (built in the 11th–13th centuries). Following the Ottoman conquest of the city the church was transformed into the Yeni Cami (later Yeni Cuma) mosque.

Trabzon in today's Turkey

The city gradually broke out of its isolation following migration to Germany beginning in the 1960s, the development of tea and hazelnut plantations, forest products and fishing, and the construction of a harbour (1954), an airport (1957) and the Black Sea Technical University (1963). Today Trabzon has a population of almost 800,000. The end of the Soviet Union has given the city a new lease of life.

Rapid development and crucial internal migration have however brought with them a chaotic urbanisation. The increase in traffic has led to the construction of a road system that has completely spoilt the city. Trabzon has become cut off from the sea – there is barely any beach left.

The city has also become famous for sad events: the murders of the Italian priest Andrea Santoro in 2006 and the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007; today Trabzon is an extremely conservative, nationalist and Islamist city. The election results of the last ten years demonstrate this well, since in 2002 the results contrasted starkly with the national average:[8] the two Islamist parties, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) and the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*, SP) combined received 49.5% of the vote, compared to the national average of 34.2%. In the elections of July 27, 2007, the Trabzon AKP received an absolute majority of 56.8% however. At the same time, the AKP took seven of eight parliamentary mandates, with the eighth going to the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP), which had received 13.6% of the vote (2002: 14.6%). In 2011 there was an increase in this trend: together the Islamist parties received 64.8% of the vote in Trabzon.[9]

This is the situation in the city today; it is searching for its identity in a region that has remained on the edge of modernity. Only the awakening of the Black Sea as a commercial zone, more active relations with Georgia and Russia and an improvement in relations with Armenia and Iran can help Trabzon out of its provinciality.

Notes

1) Cf. Anthony Bryer: *The Empire of Trebizond and the Pontos*, London 1980.
2) Heath W. Lowry: *The Ottoman Tahrir Defters as a source for Urban Demographic History: The case study of Trabzon*, Los Angeles 1977.
3) Cf. Evliya Çelebi: *Seyahatnâme* (Travelogue), Vol. II, Istanbul, Ikdam, 1314/1898, pp. 81–93.
4) Cf. Faruk Bilici: *La politique française en mer Noire (1747–1789): vicissitudes d'une implantation*, Istanbul 1992; *ibid.*: "La France et la mer Noire sous le Consulat et l'Empire: 'la porte du harem ouverte'", in: Walid Arbid; Salgur Kançal; Jean-David Mizrahi; Samir Saul (eds.): *Méditerranée, Moyen-Orient: deux siècles de relations internationals*, Paris 2003, pp. 55–92; Faruk Bilici; Ionel Cândea; Anca Popescu (eds.): *Enjeux politiques, économiques et militaires en mer Noire, (XIV^{e}–XXI^{e} siècles)*, Braïla 2007.
5) Cf. Yüksel Ayhan: "Trabzon Vilayetinde Yer Adlarını ve İdari Yapıyı Değiştirme Girişimleri". In: *Doğu Karadeniz Araştırmaları*. Istanbul 2005, pp. 11–35.
6) Cf. Faruk Bilici: "Que reste-t-il de la langue et de la culture grecques sur les côtes turques de la mer Noire?" In: *Cahiers balkaniques*, 38–39 (2011), 325–42; http://ceb.revues.org/834.
7) *Trabzon Il Yıllığı*, 1973, pp. 52–96.
8) Cf. the website of Turkey's Supreme Electoral Council (Yüksek Seçim Kurulu): http://www.ysk.gov.tr.
9) http://www.posta.com.tr/secim/2011/sehir?Id=61.

Faruk Bilici, Professor at the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales, Paris.

Franziska Rich interviews Juliana Nikitina

Rehabilitating Young Offenders

St. Petersburg's Basilius Centre, founded by Juliana Nikitina, is dedicated to reintegrating young offenders into society. To protect young people from long-term problems such as mental disorders and trauma, the centre's work is based on the principle of "rehabilitation, not punishment". Despite its success in reintegrating vulnerable young people into society, a major obstacle to the Basilius Centre's work is the state's lack of interest in appropriate solutions to social problems, as Juliana Nikitina explains to us.

G2W: The Basilius Centre's work has always undergone constant development. Can you describe for us briefly, what services the centre offers today?

Juliana Nikitina: The main focus of our work is of course the activities directly concerning the rehabilitation of young offenders. The rehabilitation program involves regular school attendance, drama and art therapy in our own workshops, sport and cultural education. At the request of the local authorities we have opened a second rehabilitation group. Unfortunately, because of a room shortage we had to use our post-rehabilitation assisted living quarters. So instead of a group for assisted living, there is now a second rehabilitation group.

We also have a department for social care and support looking after young people following rehabilitation, a department which works with the parents, and our volunteers' centre, which developed from our youth club "Favor", so when someone has completed their rehabilitation courses, they can meet other young people and share in activities with them. I should also mention that we have started a socio-pedagogical SOS on-call service to respond in a crisis, for example when people under the age of criminal responsibility are arrested.

How many young people are currently in the Basilius Centre's care?

At the moment we have twelve at the centre in our two rehabilitation groups. Our social care and support service is working with a further 16. The SOS service has only just been started and so far it has been used four times by the police, having been created so that they can work with us. It will still take some time for the police to get used to our services and working with us in the way St. Petersburg's juvenile courts have been doing. I think it will take until the end of the year for the police to call for our social pedagogues every time they arrest someone under the age of criminal responsibility in our municipal district. Because it's a legal requirement that the social pedagogues are present when police interview children below the age of criminal responsibility. But unfortunately, this law is adhered to poorly in practice. That's why we are committed to helping the children concerned, who are usually twelve or thirteen years old. That also gives us the opportunity to offer our support to girls.

The Basilius Centre's existing rehabilitation programs are only open to boys. What help can you offer to girls who have come into conflict with the law?

Our day centre also works with girls and their parents, but at the moment it is not possible for them to stay with us. Quite clearly, the next step in the development of our work has to be opening a rehabilitation group for girls. But we need more rooms for this. There is a prospect of that happening, but many questions remained unanswered. I have repeatedly requested the city authorities for more rooms in our building. We simply cannot have each service and each department in a different part of St. Petersburg.

How many people currently work at the Basilius Centre?

We have 22 employees, as we have many services which must be provided around the clock. This includes eight social pedagogues and psychologists. Then there are the organiser of the art studio and the coordinator of the SOS service, and four people working in administration and bookkeeping.

Priest Georgiy Kleba acts as a chaplain to the young people and also coaches them at wrestling.

The rehabilitation process also involves art therapy in the Centre's own craft studio run by Marina Rezina.

The young people at the Basilius Centre regularly take part in group and one-to-one discussions.

We also receive a lot of help and support from volunteers. I am delighted that our work also receives a lot of recognition from other organisations, particularly the St. Petersburg Obstacle Course Centre, a junior sports organisation. But we also have the support of the Russian Orthodox Church in the form of our eparchy in St. Petersburg and Bishop Panteleimon (Shatov), the chairman of the synodal department of Church charity and social work. In contrast to the Orthodox youth, who to our mind have little interest in social commitment. Wonderful young people come from elsewhere however to support us.

These volunteers also include young people who have completed our rehabilitation projects. That is especially pleasing, as it shows that our organisation is a vibrant organisation. The young people usually need a while to realise what has happened to them during their nine months at the Basilius Centre. But afterwards they get back in touch with us, and then we often encounter them as balanced young men with a sober outlook on life. They participate as volunteers in the organisation of cultural and sporting events for the young people and enjoy spending their Church holidays with them. There are many ways to help out, for example a number of students from the St. Petersburg Obstacle Course Centre assist as tutors.

What trends has juvenile crime shown in recent years?
The juvenile crime rate has remained stable in recent years, but we mustn't forget that we're now looking at the years with the lowest birth rates in the 1990s. Frighteningly, the number of serious crimes has increased significantly. Whereas we used to be working with children convicted of theft and selling drugs, we now have more young people in rehabilitation because of robbery, assault and causing bodily harm. So we are dealing with far more aggressive young people than we were seeing only a few years ago.

Two years ago you presented to the prison service a modern concept in which rehabilitation begins while a sentence is being served. How are things looking?
We had begun to put this concept into practice in the juvenile remand centre in St. Petersburg. But then it was not approved by the Russian prison service. A conflict developed, and since then we have been refused access to the remand centre.

In February you issued a press release declaring that the work of the Basilius Centre was threatened by financial difficulties. What is the situation today?
At the beginning of the year we were indeed in a very precarious situation, because the city's financial contributions were unexpectedly cut from our budget for 2013. Presumably they want to see how big our network is, and whether we enjoy influential support. It is mainly down to Father Pjotr Moukhin, a young and energetic priest and the chairman of the Orthodox University Chaplaincy that we were able to turn the situation in our favour. The efforts of Father Pjotr and the indignant responses of others convinced the city to alter its budget in May, granting us a contribution of nine million roubles (CHF 262,000; € 213,000), although it might be autumn before we receive the money. The vice governor of St. Petersburg has however seen to it that we receive considerable donations from large firms such the energy company "Lenenergo", and others. This allays the danger for the time being. But whether or not next year will be a similar struggle, we just don't know.

Could it be that the reticence of the City of St. Petersburg is connected to the restrictive laws against non-commercial organisations? Has that law had an impact on the Centre?
Their impact on the Basilius Centre is more theoretical. In practice, nothing has changed for us. But the fact that the state refuses to recognise us as a fully-fledged partner with whom to solve serious social issues has always made things difficult for us. The authorities simply cannot accept that a number of NGOs have developed so much in recent years and are now able to offer social concepts worthy of discussion at the governmental level.

To conclude the rehabilitation process, you take a group of youths on a long trip. What does this trip involve?
The "school of wandering", as we now call our "school of survival", is a very important stage in the young people's rehabilitation and usually has a lasting effect. This year at least 15 young people, for whom we will have at least nine staff, will going on a journey. We will be camping in the north of our country, in the wilderness region of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, with a few stops at Orthodox parishes and monasteries. During this time the young people will learn to train their stamina and initiative and gain a degree of social competence that is essential for a successful return to normal life. This process usually runs completely free of conflict. We're very grateful to the G2W Institute for its financial support of this important part of our rehabilitation program, which we have to fund exclusively through donations.

* * *

You can support the work of Juliana Nikitina with a donation to the G2W Institute's account (IBAN CH22 0900 0000 8001 51780) using the notation "Basilius Centre".

Sport and good sportsmanship are important elements of the rehabilitation program.

A dog brings high spirits during a pilgrimage to the Intercession Convent in the village of Tervinichi.

The "School of Survival" often takes the young people to northern regions such as the Murmansk region.

Odessa Transfer

Katharina Raabe, Monika Sznajderman (eds.)

Odessa Transfer
Nachrichten vom Schwarzen Meer
Frankfurt/M.: Suhkamp Verlag 2009, 258 pp.
ISBN:978-3-518-42117-8;€26.80;CHF45.30.

"In barely two thousand years, the sea has become curiously old, today it's a senile tart, make up plastered across her face like a mask and red lipstick smeared over her false teeth" (105). Mircea Cărtărescu's portrayal of the Black Sea is quite apt: the loss of the soul and the selling of body and spirit sum up the (unspoken) theme running through the contributions to the volume *Odessa Transfer*. A particularly perfidious manifestation of this mental prostitution is the case of children being forced to give up their souls for the good of the collective through the almost military drill of the Orljonok summer holiday camp (Katja Petrowskaya).

The contemporary prostitution of the Black Sea coast is portrayed quite unsparingly. Sometimes it is the common people who sell their bodies. They are transformed into clothes racks or wardrobes – consummately depicted by Nicoleta Esinencu: "now I have 10 bras on / and 10 pairs of knickers […] but this time I've also bought blue jeans […] and she starts doing up / her zips / one after the other / so I can choose a colour for myself too" (174). The owners of the SUVs and sea-front villas are not spared either: they have sold their souls for money and power in its pure form (K.-M. Gauß).

The (post)socialist realities are most notably illustrated by Attila Bartis. His teacher in Romania showed him the "sea of Romania, the most beautiful in the world" as an empty aquarium, surrounded by a dripping hosepipe and a portrait of the General Secretary of the Party. There can be no better depiction of the inner emptiness and the actually existing exterior.

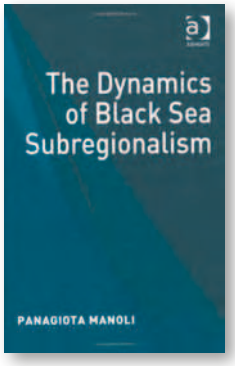
Anyone expecting a declaration of love for the region should leave this book unopened. It is a story of catastrophes, but the authors also deal with many issues with devotion and affection – whereas the present is described as a mixture of decay and vulgarisation (Cărtărescu's description of a Romanian wedding being a prime example).

Those who don't know the region may find the people portrayed decadent and inconsiderate. K.-M. Gauß's tourist guide Olga is the only one to show something approaching empathy: "Our people are incredibly rough in the day-to-day, although they are so warm-hearted and generous" (188). Her words should be the incentive to readers to visit the region for themselves.

Nicole Gallina, Fribourg

The Dynamics of Black Sea Subregionalism

Panagiota Manoli



The Dynamics of Black Sea Subregionalism
Farnham: Ashgate 2012, 249 pp.
ISBN 978-0-7546-7991-2; £ 60.–.

2012 marked twenty years of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Today, the organisation comprises twelve states (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine) and various other countries and international organisations, such as Germany, Austria and the EU, in an observational capacity. The political economist Panagiota Manoli spent five years working for the BSEC's parliamentary assembly and the combination of inside knowledge and the outside perspective of an academic make her almost predestined to examine the development in regional collaboration of the last two decades, particularly in the economic and political spheres.

In this study, Manoli does not describe the Black Sea as a region, but uses the English term "subregionalism" in order to make clear that cooperation and collaboration between the Black Sea coastal states are in a reciprocal relationship with the more broadly defined process of EU integration: "A generic element of Black Sea subregionalism is its dependence on broader Pan-European integration process" (212).

Following an introductory chapter on the conception and construction of regional spaces and sub-spaces, Manoli's second chapter examines various non-BSEC institutions and initiatives aiming at inter-regional cooperation in the Black Sea area. Her third chapter describes the institutions and functional mechanisms of the BSEC, whose founding principle was "stability and peace through prosperity". To this day, however, the BSEC has remained an intergovernmental organisation, as its individual member states refuse to hand over responsibilities: "Policy-making in the area has been marked by inter-governmental entrepreneurship rather than by the demands of transnational interests" (98).

In the subsequent three chapters, Manoli makes clear why relations between the Black Sea states are determined by conflict more often than by cooperation when she elaborates on specific policies: taking security and energy policies are an example, she examines the various geostrategic and economic interests of the region's three main players (Russia, Turkey and the EU) as well as the many smaller countries.

Stefan Kube

Russlands imperiale Macht

Bianca Pietrow-Ennker (ed.)

Russlands imperiale Macht
Integrationsstrategien und ihre Reichweite
in transnationaler Perspektive
Vienna: Böhlau Verlag 2012, 400 pp.
ISBN 978-3-412-20949-0; € 49.90; CHF 66.90.

This edited collection was put together by the University of Konstanz's excellence cluster as a contribution to research on "the problem of integration" within the context of the history of Eastern Europe (Introduction, 9). Fifteen wide-ranging articles in the field of cultural studies pulled together by the editor's introduction examine the Russian and Soviet Empires and their successor regions. Cultural transfer (both from West to East and East to West) and processes of transfer within cultures are analysed on the premise and from the perspective of (largely asymmetrical) power relations, beginning with the imperial character of the Tsaric and the Soviet empires (11–13).

The book's first section deals with the development of imperial and hegemonial concepts, first dealing with the adoption of ideas on empire in the eighteenth century (Richard Vulpius), then the creation of an imperial centre in the form of discourses on Moscow in the Soviet Union (Jan C. Behrends) or sport as a vehicle for creating a new society (Nikolaus Katzer). In the second section forms of the representation and legitimisation of imperial power in the nineteenth century are examined, with a focus on academia (Oliver Reisner) or urban modernisation (Malte Rolf), but also on the symbolic integration of historical figures into new imperial interpretations (Lars Karl).

The third section, on the transnationality and internationally of power strategies, focuses on the Soviet Union and includes a piece examining the Comintern as a classical transnational network and instrument of imperial hegemony (Brigitte Studer).

A fourth section then centres on "resistance and alternatives", the last two chapters going beyond the already broad focus in analysing the foreign relations of the Polish oppositionists and the political relevance of the East Central European culture of memory. Despite this heterogeneity, the impression is of extremely interesting individual contributions whose variety offers a good insight into current research and conceptual developments on empire in the Eastern European context and invites further thought and research (including synthesising work) on the subject.

Eva Maurer, Schweizerische Osteuropabibliothek, Berne

Gemeinsam getrennt

Victor Herdt, Dietmar Neutatz (eds.)

Gemeinsam getrennt
Bäuerliche Lebenswelten des späten Zarenreiches
in multiethnischen Regionen am Schwarzen Meer
und an der Wolga
(= Veröffentlichungen des Nordost-Instituts,
vol.7)
Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2010, 308 pp.
ISBN 978-3-447-05833-9. € 34.–.

The essays in this collection are devoted to the Volga and Black Sea Germans in late nineteenth-century Russia and their relations to their Slavic and Tartaric neighbours. As is well known, the Volga Germans are usually examined in terms of their otherness to their Russian, Ukrainian and Tartaric neighbours: their language, confession/religion, mentality, work ethic, education, economic and social development etc. While the Slavic neighbours are often portrayed as "poor, backward and alcoholic" (not always incorrectly), the German colonists themselves are glorified as perfect farmers (often incorrectly). The editors of this volume, on the other hand, call for a "change of perspective, the questioning of the apparent obviousness of the differences and their range and a search for the similarities between the ethnic and confessional groups beyond the usual ethno-stereotypes ("German orderliness") and the actual structural differences" (8). They emphasise the need to discover common ground and convergences that have hitherto been neglected.

The fourteen essays focus on a variety of topics: for instance, the demographic development of Lutheran and Catholic villages; the different work ethics of Lutheran (Finn and German) and Russian Orthodox farmers; the schooling of German, Russian, Bulgarian, Tartaric and Bashkir farmers in the Volga region; Tartar and German farmers' fears of Russianisation. One essay compares works by the Russian writer Anton Chekhov (*Muzhiki*) and the Volga German teacher and writer August Lonsinger (*Nor net lopper g'gewa*), in which Russian and German peasant life around 1900 is depicted in great detail. Another piece finds Volga German references in the work of the Russian writer Boris Pilnyak, who was born Bernhard Wogau in 1894 and was shot in 1938.

There is also a focus on Shtundism in the Ukraine: Orthodox seasonal workers hired on large Black Sea German farms adopted Protestant beliefs and in 1870 displayed their renunciation of the state Church by placing their icons before the Orthodox church. There is also examination of secularisation on the part of rich Orthodox factory owners and merchants as well the tide of apostasy in 1865, which saw tens of thousands of baptised Tartars reconvert to Islam.

Gerd Stricker, Küsnacht

The Academic Swiss Caucasus Net (ASCN)

The ACADEMIC SWISS CAUCASUS NET (ASCN) is a programme aimed at promoting the social sciences and humanities in the South Caucasus. Those involved in the programme believe that their participation encourages constructive debate on society, which in turn contributes to the region's transformation process. The programme's different activities foster the emergence of a new generation of talented scholars in the South Caucasus. Promising junior researchers receive support through research projects, capacity-building trainings and scholarships. The programme emphasises the advancement of individuals. Emphasis is also placed on international networking, thus promoting sustained cooperation among scholars based in the South Caucasus and those based in Switzerland.

The ASCN Programme is coordinated and operated by the Interfaculty Institute for Central and Eastern Europe (IICEE) at the University of Fribourg. It is supported by the GEBERT RÜF STIFTUNG.

More information under: www.ascn.ch

IMPRESSUM

Herausgeber **Institut G2W. Ökumenisches Forum für Glauben, Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West**
Birmensdorferstrasse 52, Postfach 9329, CH-8036 Zürich
Tel.: 0041 (0)44 342 18 19, Fax 0041 (0)44 240 06 10
g2w.sui@bluewin.ch | *www.g2w.eu*
Redaktion Stefan Kube, dipl.theol. (Chefredakteur),
Dr. phil. Regula Zwahlen Guth, Olga Stieger MA
redaktion.g2w@bluewin.ch
Die Meinung der namentlich zeichnenden Verfasser braucht nicht mit der Meinung der Redaktion übereinzustimmen.
Erscheinungsweise monatlich **ISSN** 2253-2465
Bezugspreis Jahresabonnement CHF 80.–/€ 65.–;
Abonnement für Studierende CHF 40.–/€ 32.–; Einzelheft CHF 10.–/€ 7.–
Bezugsbedingungen Bestellungen sind an das Institut G2W zu richten. Das Abo gilt für ein Jahr und verlängert sich, wenn es nicht bis zum 15. November schriftlich beim Institut G2W gekündigt wird.
Konten Postcheck-Konto Zürich 80-15178-0;
IBAN CH22 0900 0000 8001 51780
Postbank Karlsruhe, Konto-Nr. 70346-757, BLZ 660 100 75
Postsparkasse Wien, Konto Nr. 2380.515, BLZ 60 000
Produktion Thomas Stark, Neuberg (A) **Druck** Druckerei Konstanz GmbH

Verein G2W – Ökumenisches Forum für Glauben, Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West
Präsident Prof. Dr. Georg Rich, Aarau **Aktuarin** Eva Gysel, Wilchingen
Redaktionsverantwortliche Rahel Černá-Willi
Jahresbeiträge, Mitgliedschaften: Kollektiv-A CHF 400.–, einschließlich 3 Abo, **Kollektiv-B** CHF 200.–, einschließlich 1 Abo; **Einzelmitglieder** (ohne Abo) CHF 50.– In den meisten Kantonen können freie Zuwendungen an G2W bis zu 70 % in Abzug gebracht werden (bei zweckgebundenen Spenden für die Projektarbeit zu 100 %)

G2W – Ökumenisches Forum für Glauben, Religion und Gesellschaft in Ost und West – Deutsche Sektion e. V.
Präsident Bischof em. Dr. h.c. Rolf Koppe, Am Papenberg 5c,
DE – 37075 Göttingen
Geschäftsführer Heiner Hesse, Max-Josef-Metzger-Strasse 1,
DE – 39104 Magdeburg
Jahresbeiträge Korporativmitglieder € 130.–, einschließlich 2 Abo
Einzelmitglieder € 65.–, einschließlich 1 Abo
Konto Postbank (Giro) Hamburg, Konto-Nr. 3328-209 BLZ 200 100 20
G2W – Deutsche Sektion e. V. ist laut Bescheid des Finanzamtes Magdeburg vom 14. 6. 2007 von der Körperschaftssteuer befreit, weil sie ausschließlich und unmittelbar gemeinnützigen Zwecken dient.